Mustansir Mir

Coherence in the Qur'ān

A Study of Iṣlāḥī's Concept of *Naẓm* in *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*

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Title cover: An ornamented page of the Qur'an (14th Century) in Qaysoon Masjid.

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To my father
Muhammad Ṣafdar Mir
who is a constant source of inspiration
and Dr. Farrukh H. Malik
for his unfailing support

Those who tore the Qur'an to pieces.

Qur'ān, 15:91

"And this," he said, "is the reason why the cure of many diseases is unknown to the physicians of Hellas, because they disregard the whole, which ought to be studied also, for the part can never be well unless the whole is well."

Plato, *Charmides*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

This work is a revised version of my doctoral dissertation, which I completed at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 1983. It is an attempt to introduce to Western scholars of Islam a major 20th-century Urdu Qur'ān commentary, a commentary that marks a radical departure from the traditional style of exegesis.

In the course of writing my dissertation, I received very helpful comments and criticisms from the members of my doctoral committee, for which I am grateful. I would especially like to thank Professor James A. Bellamy, chairman of the committee, who set exacting standards, and Professor Fazlur Rahman of the University of Chicago, who most graciously agreed to serve as a member on the committee. I gratefully acknowledge the permission given to reproduce or draw on material published in the following journals: "Iṣlāḥī's Concept of Sura-Pairs," *Muslim World,* LXXIII (1983) 1:22-32; "Comparative Study of a Few Verses in Iṣlāḥī and Other Scholars," *Hamdard Islamicus,* VII (1984) 1:25-36; and "Iṣlāḥī's Concept of Sūra-Groups," *Islamic Quarterly,* XXVIII (1984) 2:73-85. An article based on chapter III of this book and scheduled to appear in *Studia Islamica* was withdrawn with the kind permission of the editors. Most of the biographical information about Iṣlāḥī was provided by Mr. Khalid Masood. Finally, I must thank Mr. Tariq Quraishi of the American Trust Publications for helping, in more ways than one, to make possible publication of this book.

Unless otherwise indicated, the translation of the Qur'ānic verses cited is my own.

The following abbreviations are used: vs. = verse; vss. = verses; S. = Sūrah; Ss. = Sūrahs; G. = Group; Gs. = Groups.

INTRODUCTION

Composition of the Qur'ān: The Prevalent View

Muslim Qur'ān exegesis is of several types—traditionist, theological, literary-philological, juristical.[1] But if there is one feature that almost all types have in common, it is probably atomism. By atomism is here meant a verse-by-verse approach to the Qur'ān. With most Muslim exegetes, the basic unit of Qur'ān study is one or a few verses taken in isolation from the preceding and following verses. This approach led to the widely-held belief (or the belief may have caused the approach) that the received arrangement of Qur'ānic verses and sūrahs is not very significant for exegetical pur-

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[1]Traditionist *tafsīr* ("exegesis") is based on *aḥādīth* ("reports" from or about Muḥammad; sing., *ḥadīth*), *asbāb an-nuzūl* ("occasions of revelation"; sing., *sabab an-nuzūl*), and *riwāyāt* ("historical reports" or "opinions of early authorities"; sing., *riwāyah*). Two commentaries of this type are: *Jāmi^c al-Bayān ^{c}an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān* by Abū Ja^{c}far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī (224-310/839-923), and *Ad-Durr al-Manthūr f ī t-Tafsīr bi l-Ma'thūr*, by Jalāl ad-Dīn ^{c}Abd ar-Raḥmān as-Suyūṭī (849-911/1445-1505). Theological *tafsīr* seeks to defend and support particular theological views against rival views. The prime example in this category is the *At-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* of Fakhr ad-Dīn Abū ^{c}Abd Allāh ibn ^{c}Umar ar-Rāzī (544-606/1150-1210); the work is also known as *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*. Literary-philological *tafsīr* concentrates on the rhetorical, linguistic, and grammatical aspects of the Qur'ān. The best representative of this class is the *Al-Kashshāf ^{c}an Ḥaqā'iq at-Tanzīl wa ^{c}Uyūn al-Aqāwīl* of Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn ^{c}Umar az-Zamakhsharī (467-538/1075-1144). Writers of juristical *tafsīr* deal primarily with the Qur'ānic verses containing legal injunctions, and present, often in a polemical fashion, the views held by their schools on those verses. Two well-known examples are: *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (3 vols.; Istanbul: Maṭba^{c}at al-Awqāf al-Islāmiyyah, 1335-1338/1916 or 7-1920) by the Ḥanafī jurist, Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ^{c}Alī ar-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣāṣ (305-370/917-980), and a work of the same title by the Mālikī jurist, Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ^{c}Abd Allāh al-Ma^{c}āfirī, known as Ibn al-^{c}Arabī (468-543/1076-1148).

Two points should be noted. First, the above classification is not meant to be exhaustive. Other types of *tafsīr* exist. There is, for example, mystical *tafsīr*, which employs an esoteric mode of interpretation (see next note). Second, the classification is not meant to be a rigid one, as there is considerable overlapping of content and approach among the several types. While, for example, theological discussions may be said to be the most distinctive feature of Rāzī's commentary, this commentary also contains an extensive treatment of grammatical points and defends the Shāfi^{c}ī against the Ḥanafī juristical position.

poses. "Most scholars, including Imām Mālik and al-Bāqillānī, hold the view that the arrangement of the Qur'ān has nothing to do with divine guidance."[2]

In view of this belief of Muslim scholars, it is not surprising that many Western writers have concluded that the Qur'ān lacks coherence of composition. Thomas Carlyle bluntly described the Qur'ān as "toilsome reading ... a wearisome, confused jumble, crude, incondite."[3] Montgomery Watt, pulling his punches but still representing the standard orientalist position, remarks that the Qur'ānic arrangement is "unsystematic,"[4] that the Qur'ān lacks "sustained composition at any great length."[5]

This view of the composition of the Qur'ān has been responsible for the relatively underdeveloped state of Qur'ānic studies in the West. As John Merrill observes: "A lack of logical connection in the chapters of the Qur'ān has been felt by many Westerners and has often discouraged them from its perusal."[6] And while the subject of the chronology of the Qur'ān has intrinsic interest, it is probable that frustration with the existing arrangement of the Qur'ān was a principal motivation behind the attempts to reconstruct the Qur'ān chronologically.[7]

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[2]Jullandri, p. 76. Muslim mystics, or Ṣūfīs, are hardly an exception. It is true that they have often attempted to see the Qur'ān as a unity, but, as Fazlur Rahman remarks, "this unity was imposed upon the Qur'ān (and Islam in general) from without rather than derived from a study of the Qur'ān itself." *Islam and Modernity,* p. 3.

[3]Quoted in H.A.R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 25.

[4]Watt, p. xi. See also ibid., p. 22, where Watt speaks of "a characteristic of the Qur'ān which has often been remarked on, namely, its disjointedness."

[5]Ibid., p. 73.

[6]Merrill, p. 135. Writing in a similar vein, Hartwig Hirschfeld had already remarked (p. 5) that "the manifold difficulties" of the Qur'ān "repel rather than encourage the study of the Qur'ān."

[7]Such attempts were made by Theodor Nöldeke, Hübert Grimme, J.M. Rodwell, and Richard Bell. (Cf. N.J. Dawood, tr., *The Koran*, fourth revd. ed. [Penguin, 1974], p. 11.) For brief reviews of these attempts, see Watt, chapter 7, and Blachère, *Introduction*, pp. 247-263. Blachère also speaks of the attempts made by Muslim scholars to rearrange the Qur'ān chronologically. These attempts were inspired, he says, "d'une curiosité à la fois pieuse et pratique," and, despite the near identity of the sources used by Muslim and Western scholars, led "à des résultats absolument divergents." Ibid., p. 240. He concludes: "Remarquons bien qu'il ne s'agit pas d'un reclassement chronologique à proprement parler." Ibid., p. 244. Cf. Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes*, p. xii.

Be that as it may, the dominant view about the Qur'ān has been that it is lacking in coherent composition, and that whatever composition it may have is, from a hermeneutical point of view, not very significanct. The view is shared, as we have seen, by Muslim and Orientalist scholars.

Nature and Significance of Iṣlāḥī's Work

Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, a contemporary Pakistani scholar, rejects the view that the Qur'ān, in its received form, lacks coherence. He holds that the Qur'ān is endowed with a coherence that is not only remarkable in itself but is integral to the meaning and interpretation of the Qur'ān. This view constitutes a major, in fact *the* major, underpinning of his eight-volume Qur'ān commentary, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* ("Reflection on the Qur'ān"), completed only a few years ago.

It is also a radical view, one that poses a manifold challenge to the tradition of Qur'ān exegesis. If found to be valid, it would change fundamentally our perception of the kind of book the Qur'ān is. As such, it needs to be closely examined.

Iṣlāḥī borrows his basic theoretical framework from his teacher and mentor, Ḥamīd ad-Dīn ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Farāhī (1280-1349/1863-1930). But, as will become clear in due course, he modifies Farāhī's theory and makes significant additions to it. So, while in the present work Farāhī's ideas are sometimes discussed at length, this is done only in order to provide the necessary background, the focus throughout being on those ideas as interpreted by Iṣlāḥī and on ideas that are original to Iṣlāḥī.

The term that Iṣlāḥī (following Farāhī) uses to describe coherence in the Qur'ān is *naẓm* (literally, "order, arrangement, organization"). We shall present, analyze, and evaluate Iṣlāḥī's concept of *naẓm* as found in *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān,* attempting to see the significance of the concept for Qur'ān interpretation.

Naẓm constitutes the most important, but still only one, of the exegetical principles Iṣlāḥī subscribes to. Some of the other principles used by him also have *naẓm* ramifications, and we shall touch upon them. Generally, however, we shall be concerned with what Iṣlāḥī specifically designates as the principle of *naẓm.*

It is true that a number of early Muslim scholars have maintained that the Qur'ān possesses coherence. The word often used by these writers to describe that coherence is, again, *naẓm.* But their understanding of Qur'ānic *naẓm,* as we shall see, is of a rudimentary

kind. A few modern scholars have essayed to show the cohesion in the Qur'ānic outlook, but, as will also be seen later, without sufficiently accounting for the arrangement the Qur'ān actually possesses. Iṣlāḥī's *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān,* based though it is on Farāhī's pioneer work, is the first thoroughgoing attempt to show that the Qur'ān is marked by thematic, and also by structural, coherence. As such, *Tadabbur* suggests lines of Qur'ānic study that are pregnant with new possibilities.

So far no analytical study of *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* has been made. It is written in Urdu and that makes it difficult of access to Arab and Western scholars. Even in Pakistan, until recently, it was not widely known, though it has now attracted much scholarly attention there. Also, a few of Iṣlāḥī's opinions have become controversial,[8] arousing as a result general interest in *Tadabbur.* This study, it is hoped, will introduce an important modern *tafsīr* to Western Islamicists and pave the way for a fuller examination of its author's views.

Sources, Methodology, and Plan

Since no prior research on Iṣlāḥī exists, and only very little work has been done on Farāhī,[9] or on the idea of Qur'ānic *naẓm* itself, the present work is to a very large extent based on primary sources. For the basic *naẓm* theory as set forth by Farāhī, reliance has been placed on three of Farāhī's works: *Dalā'il an-Niẓām* ("Arguments for [the Presence of] *Naẓm* [in the Qur'ān"]), *At-Takmīl fī Uṣūl at-Ta'wīl* ("Comprehensive Treatment of the Principles of [Qur'ān] Interpretation"), and *Majmūᶜah-yi Tafāsīr-i Farāhī* ("Collected Commentary Works of Farāhī"). The last book contains an exhaustive Introduction in which Farāhī sums up his *naẓm* views.

[8]For example, Iṣlāḥī holds that the distinction made by Muslim jurists between the punishment for a married fornicator and that for an unmarried fornicator is without basis, and that the punishment for both is the same, namely, that stated in Qur'ān 24:2 (see *Tadabbur,* 4:500-507). A few years ago a Pakistan High Court cited Iṣlāḥī's view in one of its rulings, causing much agitation on the part of religious scholars and the public.

[9]Sayyid Saᶜīd Aḥsan al-ᶜĀbidī has written a doctoral dissertation entitled "Ḥamīd ad-Dīn al-Farāhī: Ḥayātuhū wa Manhajuhū fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān wa Athar Dhālik fī l-Hind" (cited in *Ad-Dalīl al-Bibliyūjrāfī li r-Rasā'il al-Jāmiᶜiyyah fī Miṣr, 1922-1974,* Vol. 1, *Al-Insāniyyāt* [Cairo, 1976], p. 475). So far, however, I have not been able to obtain a copy of this work.

In the Introduction to *Tadabbur,* Iṣlāḥī provides a concise summary of Farāhī's thoughts on *naẓm,* and also indicates where he modifies or adds to Farāhī's *naẓm* theory. The Introduction is thus a convenient source for identifying the theoretical views of Iṣlāḥī. Very useful, too, is his *Mabādi-yi Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* ("Guide to Reflection on the Qur'ān"), which antedates *Tadabbur* by a number of years and may be regarded as a more detailed Introduction to the latter work. The principal source of material for the present study, of course, is the volumes of *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* themselves.

Many Muslim writers from the 4th/10th to the 13th/19th century have dealt with the question of Qur'ānic *naẓm.* From the works of a number of such authors I have tried to isolate the *naẓm* views found in them, and, making a comparative study of those views, tried to place a historical perspective on the idea of Qur'ānic *naẓm* before embarking on a study of that idea in Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī.

Iṣlāḥī conceives of Qur'ānic *naẓm* on three main levels—*naẓm* of the individual sūrah, *naẓm* of paired sūrahs, and *naẓm* of groups of sūrahs—and each level had to be approached a little differently. The first level is the most important. But since the basic rules governing a sūrah's *naẓm* are more or less uniform, it was considered sufficient, for the purposes of illustrating this type of *naẓm,* to select one long sūrah and discuss it in detail, though a number of other sūrahs also come in for treatment in this connection. The main task faced in discussing the second type of *naẓm* was to bring out the notion of complementarity between the members of a sūrah pair. And since this complementarity takes many forms, it was necessary to identify the major forms, and so a relatively large number of sūrahs had to be cited, though it was possible to keep the discussion brief. As in the case of a sūrah's *naẓm,* so in the case of the *naẓm* of sūrah groups, it was possible to be selective, and so the brunt of discussion was borne by one or two sūrah groups. *Naẓm* at this level, however, becomes a little more complex and gives rise to certain issues that call for treatment. In discussing each of these levels, it has been my endeavor to provide enough material, together with analysis and criticism, to enable the reader to form a judgment about Iṣlāḥī's concept of *naẓm* in the Qur'ān.

The book consists of seven chapters. Chapter I outlines the history of the concept of *naẓm.* Chapter II gives an exposition of the exegetical principles of Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī. Chapter III takes up the Farāhī-Iṣlāḥī idea of the sūrah as a unity. Chapter IV compares Iṣlāḥī's view of the sūrah as a unity with similar views of two other 20th-century Qur'ān exegetes. Chapter V examines Iṣlāḥī's view

that, as a rule, all sūrahs exist in the form of pairs. Chapter VI discusses the seven groups into which Iṣlāḥī divides the Qur'ānic sūrahs. Chapter VII presents conclusions. Two appendices offer additional examples of Iṣlāḥī's application of the *naẓm* theory.

Biographical Sketches of Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī

This work deals with the views of Iṣlāḥī, and so a biographical sketch of Iṣlāḥī is in order. But there is such a close relationship between the views and personalities of Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī that a life-sketch of Farāhī may not be out of place.

Farāhī

Farāhī was born in Phreha (hence the name "Farāhī"), a village in the district of Azamgarh (Uttar Pradesh, India).[10] He belonged to a distinguished family, and was a maternal cousin of the famous theologian-historian Muḥammad Shiblī Nu^{c}mānī (1274-1332/1858-1914).[11]

After studying Arabic, Persian, and Islamic sciences with several prominent religious scholars—Shiblī Nu^{c}mānī was one of them[12]—Farāhī, about twenty years of age, secured admission to the reputed Aligarh Muslim College[13] in order to study modern disciplines of knowledge. His recommender was Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1233-1315/1817-1897), the founder of the college. In his letter addressed to the principal, an Englishman, Sir Sayyid wrote that he was commending him a young man who was a greater scholar of Arabic and Persian than the professors of the college. While a student at the college, Farāhī rendered parts of the *Aṭ-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*[14] of Abū ^{c}Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Sa^{c}d az-Zuhrī (168-230/784-845) into Persian. The translation was found to be so good

[10]I have borrowed the details of Farāhī's life from the account with which Iṣlāḥī prefaces his translation of Farāhī's *Majmū^{c}ah.*

[11]Farāhī, *Majmū^{c}ah,* p. 9.

[12]Ibid., pp. 9-11.

[13]The Aligarh Muslim College was founded in 1292/1875. It became a university in 1339/1920.

[14]9 vols.; Beirut: Dār aṣ-Ṣādir, 1380-1388/1960-1968.

that Sir Sayyid had it included in the college syllabus.[15] Farāhī obtained his B.A. from Ilāhābād University.[16]

For the next many years, Farāhī taught Arabic at various institutions, including Aligarh and Dār al-^{c}Ulūm, Hyderabad. During his stay in Hyderabad, Farāhī conceived the idea of establishing a universtiy where all religious and modern sciences would be taught in Urdu. The scheme he prepared for this purpose later materialized in the form of Jāmi^{c}ah ^{c}Uthmāniyyah, Hyderabad.[17] He subsequently came to Sarā'e Mīr, a town in Azamgarh, where he took charge of the Madrasat al-Iṣlāḥ ("School for [Muslim] Reform"), an institution based on the educational ideas of Shiblī Nu^{c}mānī and Farāhī. Farāhī had served as chief administrator of the school since its inception, but other engagements had until now kept him from becoming actively involved in its affairs.[18]

From 1344/1925, when he came to Sarā'e Mīr, to 1349/1930, the year of his death, Farāhī devoted most of his time and energy to managing the affairs of the Madrasat al-Iṣlāḥ and teaching there. A few students—Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī was one of them—received special training from him; they were supposed to become the bearers of his thought.[19]

An erudite scholar, Farāhī commanded knowledge of a number of languages, among them Hebrew and English. He learnt Hebrew from the German Orientalist Josef Horovitz (1874-1931), who was professor of Arabic at the Aligarh Muslim College. Horovitz studied Arabic with Farāhī.[20]

Farāhī's chief scholarly interest was the Qur'ān, the focal point of all his writings. Most of his published works are in the form of notes that were later compiled by his students. Among his books, besides the three already mentioned, are: *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*[21] ("Vocabulary of the Qur'ān"), *Asālīb al-Qur'ān*[22] ("Style of the

[15]Farāhī, *Majmū^{c}ah,* p. 11.

[16]Ibid., p. 12.

[17]Ibid., p. 13.

[18]Ibid., p. 14.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid., p. 13.

[21]Azamgarh, India: Ad-Dā'irah al-Ḥamīdiyyah wa Maktabatuhā, 1358/1939.

[22]Azamgarh, India: Ad-Dā'irah al-Ḥamīdiyyah wa Maktabatuhā, 1389?/1969?

Qur'ān"), *Jamharat al-Balāghah*[23] ("Manual of Qur'ānic Rhetoric"), and *Im^{c}ān fī Aqsām al-Qur'ān*[24] ("Study of the Qur'ānic Oaths").

Iṣlāḥī

Iṣlāḥī is one of the most accomplished students of Farāhī. He was born in Bumhore, a village in Azamgarh, in 1324/1906. After his initial education, he was admitted to the Madrasat al-Iṣlāḥ, from where he was graduated in 1341/1922. A graduate of the Madrasat al-Iṣlāḥ is known as "Iṣlāḥī."[25]

Iṣlāḥī started his career as a journalist, writing for several newspapers. In 1344/1925 he met Farāhī, and, at the latter's suggestion, gave up his journalistic career and came to Sarā'e Mīr in order to study with him. From 1344/1925 until Farāhī's death five years later, Iṣlāḥī lived in close association with Farāhī,[26] and mastered the latter's approach to the Qur'ān. With Farāhī he studied not only the Qur'ān, but also philosophy, political science, and other subjects.

After Farāhī's death, Iṣlāḥī studied *Ḥadīth* ("Prophetic Tradition") with Muḥammad ^{c}Abd ar-Raḥmān Mubārakpūrī (1283 or 4-1354/1866 or 7-1935), one of the greatest *Ḥadīth* scholars of India. Returning to Sarā'e Mīr, he taught at the Madrasat al-Iṣlāḥ, and also became actively involved in the administration of the school. He arranged for the publication of Farāhī's works, and published a journal, *Al-Iṣlāḥ* ("Reform").[27]

In 1359/1940 Abū l-A^{c}lā Mawdūdī (1321-1400/1903-1979) founded the Jamā^{c}at-i Islāmī ("Islamic Party"), a religious-political organization. Iṣlāḥī, who was in agreement with the goals and objectives of the Jamā^{c}at, soon joined it as a regular member. In the Jamā^{c}at he became a key figure and always held distinguished positions. In fact he represented the "intellectual" element in the Jamā^{c}at, and when, in the mid-1950s, following serious differences, he resigned from the Jamā^{c}at, the Jamā^{c}at suffered a loss from which

[23]Azamgarh, India: Ad-Dā'irah al-Ḥamīdiyyah wa Maktabatuhā, 1360/1941.

[24]Azamgarh, India: Ad-Dā'irah al-Ḥamīdiyyah wa Maktabatuhā, 1349/1930.

[25]There are thus many "Iṣlāḥī's," and some of them are well-known Urdu authors. In this work, Amīn Aḥsan is the only "Iṣlāḥī" referred to.

[26]Farāhī, *Majmū^{c}ah*, p. 16.

[27]Under Iṣlāḥī's editorship, the journal was published regularly from 1355/1936 to 1359/1940. Its principal aim was to bring to light Farāhī's work on the Qur'ān. Ibid., p. 19, n. 1.

it was never to recover. In 1378/1958 Iṣlāḥī founded the Tanẓīm-i Islāmī ("Islamic Organization"), but the venture did not prove successful.

Since then Iṣlāḥī has been mainly engaged in private scholarly work. The chief product of this phase is *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān,* parts of which were first published in *Mīthāq* ("Covenant"), a monthly journal put out by Iṣlāḥī in 1379/1959. After the completion of *Tadabbur* in 1400/1980, Iṣlāḥī established, in Lahore, a study circle[28] in which instruction on the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* was to be imparted in accordance with the Farāhī-Iṣlāḥī approach. The study circle holds regular meetings, and also publishes a journal, *Tadabbur* ("Reflection").

Iṣlāḥī has written a large number of books and articles on diverse Islamic subjects. Among his books, besides *Tadabbur* and *Mabādi-yi Tadabbur-i Qur'ān,* are: *Tazkiyah-yi Nafs*[29] ("Purification of the Soul"), *Da^{c}vat-i Dīn aur Us kā Ṭarīq-i Kār*[30] ("Islamic Message and the Correct Way of Propagating It"), *Islāmī Qānūn kī Tadvīn*[31] ("Codification of Islamic Law"), *Islāmī Riyāsat*[32] ("Islamic State"), and *Pākistānī ^{c}Awrat Do Rāhe par*[33] ("Pakistani Woman at the Crossroads").

[28]It is called "Idārah-yi Tadabbur-i Qur'ān-o-Ḥadīth."

[29]Faisalabad, Pakistan: Malik Sons, 1381/1961.

[30]Lahore: Anjuman-i Khuddāmu'lqur'ān, 3rd printing, 1383/1963.

[31]Lahore: Anjuman-i Khuddāmu'lqur'ān, 1383/1963.

[32]Lahore: Anjuman-i Khuddāmu'lqur'ān, 1398/1977.

[33]Lahore: Anjuman-i Khuddāmu'lqur'ān, 1399/1978.

Chapter I

NAZM IN THE QUR'ĀN: BRIEF HISTORY OF AN IDEA

Although Muslim Qur'ān exegesis, as noted in the Introduction, is predominantly atomistic, there have been writers who have tried to see in the Qur'ān elements of coherence and integration. And *naẓm* is the term many of these writers use to descibe such elements in the Qur'ān. In this chapter we shall make a brief survey of the principal ways in which *naẓm,* as applied to the Qur'ān, has been understood. To this end we shall review the ideas of selected traditional and modern Muslim writers. For our purposes, "modern" writers are twentieth-century writers, those belonging to earlier periods being "traditional."

Traditional Writers

The idea of Qur'ānic *naẓm* seems to have arisen in connection with the discussion on the *i*^{c}*jāz* ("inimitability") of the Qur'ān.[1] As a proof of its being the Word of God, the Qur'ān presents the claim that none can produce the like of it, that it is inimitable.[2] Muslim theologians later developed this claim into a full-fledged notion of Qur'ānic *i*^{c}*jāz*.[3] With the exception of a few writers, like Abū l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn ar-Rāwandī[4] (d. 298/910), Muslim writers have unanimously held the Qur'ān to be *mu*^{c}*jiz* ("inimitable"), though they have differed on precisely how Qur'ānic *i*^{c}*jāz* is to be explained. Some of them have argued that Qur'ānic *i*^{c}*jāz* consists in Qur'ānic *naẓm.*

The views of a few early Muslim scholars who considered Qur'ānic *naẓm* to be an essential component of Qur'ānic *i*^{c}*jāz* are not known. Abū ^{c}Uthmān ^{c}Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (163-255/780-869) and Abū ^{c}Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Zayd al-Wāsiṭī (d. 309/

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[1]Abū Mūsā, p. 88.

[2]See, for example, Qur'ān 2:23; 11:13; 17:88; 52:33-34.

[3]For a historical survey of the subject, together with bibliographical information, see Abdul Aleem, pp. 64-82, 215-233.

[4]He is said to have denied the *i*^{c}*jāz* of the Qur'ān and written a book attacking Qur'ānic *naẓm*. Ḥimṣī, pp. 49-50. There were a few others who held similar views. Ibid., p. 51. Bouman, p. 19.

919) are said to have written books on Qur'ānic *naẓm*, but these are not extant.[5] The works of a few other scholars are not easily accessible.[6] The authors whose views have reached us may be divided into two broad categories: those who interpret Qur'ānic *naẓm* to mean some kind of a relationship between words and meanings, and those who understand by it a linear connection existing between the Qur'ānic verses, sūrahs, or verses and sūrahs both.

Word-Meaning Relationship

We will select four writers from the first category. They are: Abū Sulaymān Ḥamd ibn Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī (319-388/931-998), Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib al-Baqillānī (338-403/950-1013), Abū Bakr ^{c}Abd al-Qāhir ibn ^{c}Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078), and Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn ^{c}Umar az-Zamakhsharī.

1. *Khaṭṭābī.* Khaṭṭābī is the first writer definitely known to have suggested that it is *naẓm* that largely explains the *i*^{c}*jāz* of the Qur'ān. In his "Kitāb Bayān I^{c}jāz al-Qur'ān" Khaṭṭābī says that the key to Qur'ānic *i*^{c}*jāz* is Qur'ānic *balāghah* ("eloquence").[7] "The Qur'ān is inimitable," he writes, "in that it employs the most eloquent words in ideal forms of composition *(aḥsan nuẓūm at-ta'līf)*, embodying the truest meanings."[8] *Balāghah* is thus constituted of three elements: words,meanings, and *naẓm.*[9] Khaṭṭābī considers the element of *naẓm* to be more important than the other two:

> As for the modes of *naẓm*, the need to master them is greater [than the need to choose the right words or reflect on the meanings], for

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[5]Ḥimṣī, pp. 53-54, 59-60. Bouman, p. 45. Abdul Aleem, pp. 72, 74.

[6]Of the several works listed below, the first is now available to me, but unfortunately it was not possible to make use of it before this book went to press. The works are: *Naẓm ad-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa s-Suwar* by Ibrāhīm ibn ^{c}Umar al-Biqā^{c}ī (809-885/1406-1480); *Tabṣīr ar-Raḥmān wa Taysīr al-Mannān bi Ba*^{c}*ḍ Mā Yushīru ilā I*^{c}*jāz al-Qur'ān* by ^{c}Alā' ad-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan ^{c}Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Makhdūm al-Mahā'imī (776-835/1374-1432); and *Tafsīr Muḥammadī fī rtibāṭ al-Āyāt* by Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Naṣīr ad-Dīn (d. 982/1574). Suyūṭī (*Itqān,* 2:108) refers to a book he himself wrote on the relationships between the Qur'ānic verses and sūrahs.

[7]*Thalāth Rasā'il,* p. 24.

[8]Ibid., p. 27.

[9]Ibid.

> they hold words and meanings together, and it is by virtue of them that the parts of an utterance become well-knit.[10]

What does Khaṭṭābī mean by *naẓm*? A study of the many Qur'ānic examples he cites in explanation of his view[11] would lead one to conclude that *naẓm* in Khaṭṭābī stands for the particular ways in which words are arranged in order to put across the desired meaning. When he says that *naẓm* is more important than words or meanings, Khaṭṭābī implies that a poor arrangement of otherwise appropriate words would impede the conveying of the meaning, no matter how clearly the meaning was conceived mentally. The Qur'ān is inimitable, he argues, because, in addition to employing words that are perfectly suited to the meaning it wants to impart, it generates ideal *naẓm* or structure. The examples Khaṭṭābī cites to illustrate his view of Qur'ānic *naẓm*—and hence of Qur'ānic *balāghah*—are all made up either of a single word, phrase, or sentence. It may accordingly be said that *naẓm* in Khaṭṭābī is *naẓm* of individual words, phrases, or sentences; that he does not, for example, aim to show that a series of sentences taken together, or an extended passage, might be informed by *naẓm*. But the main point that emerges from the discussion above is that Khaṭṭābī regards *naẓm* as a constituent of *balaghah* that is independent of the other two constituents, words and meanings, and that he conceives of *naẓm* in terms of word-meaning arrangement.

2. *Bāqillānī.* In his *I^{c}jāz al-Qur'ān*, Bāqillānī expounds the *i^{c}jāz* of the Qur'ān. According to him, there are three proofs of Qur'ānic *i^{c}jāz*: the Qur'ān's accurate relation of little-known past events and its true prediction of future events; the fact that Muḥammad, upon whom be peace, was illiterate and could not have produced the Qur'ān himself; and Qur'ānic *naẓm*.[12] After briefly treat-

[10]Ibid., p. 36.

[11]Ibid., pp. 29 ff.

[12]Bāqillānī, pp. 48-51.

ing the first two, Bāqillānī devotes most of the book to a discussion of the third proof.[13]

Like Khaṭṭābī, Bāqillānī interprets *naẓm* in terms of Qur'ānic *balāghah*. But it is not immediately clear exactly what he means by *naẓm*. For, in different contexts, he uses the word *naẓm* in so many different senses that one almost despairs of being able to assign a definite meaning to it. It is this lack of precision on Bāqillānī's part that prompted ^{c}Ā'ishah ^{c}Abd ar-Raḥmān Bint ash-Shāṭi' to make the following remark:

> It is extremely difficult for a reader of Bāqillānī's book to derive, from the mass of dialectical arguments and lengthy passages of prose and poetry [he cites], a clear notion of the elocutionary *i^{c}jāz* of Qur'ānic *naẓm* (*fikrah wāḍiḥah fī l-i^{c}jāz al-balāghī li naẓm al-Qur'ān*).[14]

Nevertheless, Bāqillānī provides a few significant clues to what he means by Qur'ānic *naẓm*. One clue is his repeated assertion that the Qur'ān is characterized by *badī^{c}*.[15] Now *badī^{c}* is a technical term in Arabic and denotes that branch of *balāghah* which deals with the use of literary devices like *mubālaghah* ("emphatic statement"), *istiṭrād* ("digression"), *muṭābaqah* ("contrasting pairs"), *tajnīs* ("paronomasia"), etc. Bāqillānī discusses these and other devices at great length, cites from the Qur'ān examples of each, and tries to explain why, in this respect, the Qur'ān cannot be imitated. The point to note is that the science, or subscience, of *badī^{c}*, though it has to do with certain literary devices, is yet concerned with judging the appropriateness of the use of these devices to the basic aim of all speech, namely, effective communication. In other words, the question of the suitability of the expression used to the meaning intended again becomes relevant. Thus it can be said that, essentially, Bāqillānī, too, understands by *naẓm* the unique relationship that the Qur'ān establishes between words and meanings. This is

[13]It may be noted in passing that the first of the three proofs is a borrowing of Bāqillānī's. Abū Isḥāq ibn Sayyār an-Naẓẓām (160-231/775-846) is said to have believed that the Qur'ān is inimitable because of its relation of otherwise unknown past events and its prediction of events still in the womb of time. But Qur'ānic *naẓm*, he believed, could theoretically be matched, though God has, by depriving man of the ability to match it, prevented him from doing so. This is known as the theory of *ṣarfah* ("prevention"). See Abū l-Ḥasan ^{c}Alī ibn Ismā^{c}īl al-Ash^{c}arī (d. 324/935), p. 225. *Thalāth Rasā'il*, pp. 23-24, 75.

[14]Bint ash-Shāṭi' p. 100.

[15]See, for example, Bāqillānī, pp. 51, 52, 287.

also borne out by the examples he cites in illustration of Qur'ānic *naẓm*[16] and by his criticism of some of the Arab poets.[17]

3. *Jurjānī.* If *naẓm* is to Bāqillānī one of the several proofs of Qur'ānic *i^{c}jāz*, it is to Jurjānī the only proof, or at least the primary or fundamental proof, of that *i^{c}jāz*. The argument for Qur'ānic *i^{c}jāz*, he writes in "Ar-Risālah ash-Shāfiyah," rests on *naẓm*:

> The [Qur'ānic] challenge was that they [Arabs] give expression to any thought they liked but in such a way that the product should, in point of *naẓm*, either compare with the excellence of the Qur'ān or approximate that excellence.[18]

It is *naẓm*, therefore, that makes the Qur'ān inimitable,[19] and it is Qur'ānic *naẓm* that the Arabs failed to match.[20] But what does Jurjānī mean by *naẓm*?

Naẓm, Jurjānī says in *Dalā'il al-I^{c}jāz*, is the relating of words to one another in a way that would establish between them a causal connection.[21] Thus, in Arabic, words may be related to one another in three ways: noun to noun, noun to verb, and particle to noun and verb.[22] But the order in which words are arranged is determined, or ought to be determined, by the order in which meanings exist in the mind of the speaker.[23] In order to achieve a perfect translation of ideas into words, it is necessary to adhere to the rules of grammar. By grammar Jurjānī means not simply the inflectional endings of words, as he claims most grammarians before him took grammar to be, but also grammatical structures in which the positions of the structural components are significant–in which *ta^{c}rīf* ("definiteness") and *tankīr* ("indefiniteness"), *taqdīm* ("preposing") and *ta'khīr* ("postposing"), *ḥadhf* ("ellipsis") and *takrār* ("repetition"),

[16] Ibid., pp. 279 ff.

[17] Ibid., pp. 241-272, 334-366.

[18] *Thalāth Rasā'il,* p. 141.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Jurjānī, *Dalā'il,* pp. 43-44.

[22] Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[23] Ibid., pp. 93, 95, 97.

etc., are meaningful and must be reckoned with.[24] Jurjānī calls these aspects of grammar *ma^{c}ānī an-naḥw* ("grammatical meanings") and makes an understanding of them a prerequisite to the appreciation of *naẓm.*[25]

By insisting that *ma^{c}ānī an-naḥw* are an integral part of *naẓm*, Jurjānī has enlarged the scope of grammar, has in fact brought grammar closer to the science of *balāghah* or rhetoric.[26] But whether he is analayzing *ma^{c}ānī an-naḥw* or criticizing other grammarians, Jurjānī's concern always is that the speaker should, through adherence to grammatical-rhetorical rules, achieve exact and unambiguous expression of the ideas that exist in his mind. That is to say, words should serve as vehicle to thought–Jurjānī calls them *aw^{c}iyah li l-ma^{c}ānī*[27] ("receptacles for meanings").

4. *Zamakhsharī.* Zamakhsharī begins the Introduction to his Qur'ān commentary by expressing gratitude to God, Who has revealed *kalāman mu'allafan munaẓẓaman*[28] ("a well-composed and well-knit discourse"). Thus, from the outset, Zamakhsharī seems to be preoccupied with the idea that the Qur'ān is characterized by *naẓm*, and that Qur'ānic *naẓm* explains Qur'ānic *i^{c}jāz.*

But Zamakhsharī's concept of *naẓm* does not, in essence, differ from the concepts of Khaṭṭābī, Bāqillānī, and Jurjānī. It is true that, besides explaining the suitability of Qur'ānic words to Qur'ānic ideas,[29] Zamakhsharī also deals elaborately with the structure of the Qur'ānic sentence,[30] and, still further, often tries to bring out the relationships between the verses of a passage.[31] Still, Zamakhsharī, like Jurjānī, conceives of *naẓm* in grammatical-rhetorical terms, if in a much more complex way. It is by demonstrating the Qur'ān's matchless way of pressing grammar and rhetoric into its service that Zamakhsharī attempts to establish the excellence of Qur'ānic *naẓm*. To give an example, he says that the four sentences

[24] Ibid., pp. 117-118.

[25] Ibid., p. 123 passim.

[26] Ḥimṣī, p. 84.

[27] Jurjānī, *Dalā'il*, p. 95.

[28] Zamakhsharī, 1:3.

[29] Abū Mūsā, pp. 213 ff.

[30] Ibid., pp. 269 ff.

[31] Ibid., pp. 369 ff.

that make up Qur'ān 2:1-2 possess the highest kind of *balāghah* and beauty of *naẓm*, which, he adds, can be appreciated only when the many grammatical and rhetorical features—like the absence of the conjunctive particle *wāw*, the ellipsis, the preposing, and the terseness of expression—are noted and reflected on.[32]

There are of course differences between the four writers. Khaṭṭābī presents the basic idea that *naẓm* constitutes *balāghah*, and *balāghah* explains Qur'ānic *iʿjāz*; he restricts his discussion almost exclusively to Qur'ānic examples. In Bāqillānī that idea becomes more complex as Bāqillānī tries to elucidate Qur'ānic *naẓm* in terms of *badīʿ*; he tries to show that the Qur'ān is free from the imperfections that mark Arabic poetry. Jurjānī considers the grammatical meanings to be constituting *naẓm*; in explaining this *naẓm*, Jurjānī, contrary to Bāqillānī, relies heavily on Arabic poetry and refers to the Qur'ān relatively infrequently,[33] which signifies that the idea of *naẓm* in him becomes somewhat independent of the issue of *iʿjāz* and a subject of interest in itself. A balance, as it were, is reached in Zamakhsharī, who, on the one hand, cites extensively from Arabic poetry, and, on the other, shows how the Qur'ān exceeds the highest standards of human eloquence (typified for Zamakhsharī in classical Arabic poetry). At the same time, Zamakhsharī presupposes, on the reader's part, a much keener understanding of Arabic grammar and rhetoric than do Khaṭṭābī, Bāqillānī, or Jurjānī, and often establishes, between the parts of one verse or between a series of verses, *naẓm* relationships that are subtler and more complex than found in any of the other three writers.

In spite of these differences, however, the four writers take an essentially similar view of the matter before them: they all define *naẓm* as some kind of a relationship between words used and meanings intended, and they all try to prove that, in establishing such a relationship, the Qur'ān far excels any other discourse. Within the group of these writers, it is in Zamakhsharī that the idea of *naẓm* finds its most mature and balanced expression.

The views of the four writers thus mark the establishment of *naẓm* as a significant new trend in Qur'ānic exegetical approach. But these views are not only of historical interest; they are, as we shall see, presupposed in subsequent *naẓm* thought on the Qur'ān.

[32] Zamakhsharī, 1:121-122.

[33] Bint ash-Shāṭi', pp. 110-111.

Linear Connection

In the second chapter of *Al-Burhān fī ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān*, Badr ad-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh az-Zarkashī (745-794/1344-1391) discusses the question of interrelationships between the Qur'ānic verses; the word he uses to denote these interrelationships is *munāsabāt* (pl. of *munāsabah*).[34] Muslim scholarly opinion, Zarkashī says, is divided on whether the Qur'ānic verses in their present arrangement are characterized by *munāsabah*. Some argue that since, in the compiling of the Qur'ān, the revelatory sequence of the verses was abandoned, therefore the *ḥikmah* ("wise consideration") of *munāsabah* must have been observed in rearranging the Qur'ānic material. Others maintain that the Qur'ān was revealed over a period of twenty odd years and dealt with so many diverse subjects that any attempt to induce coherence in it would be futile.[35] Zarkashī himself supports the first view,[36] but notes that the task of discovering *munāsabah* in the Qur'ān is a difficult one, and that very few scholars have attempted it. Of those who have, Zarkashī cites Rāzī as an outstanding figure.[37]

Rāzī is probably the first writer to apply the idea of *naẓm* to the whole of the Qur'ān. He is convinced that the Qur'ān yields most of its *laṭā'if* ("subtly beautiful points") through the *naẓm* or arrangement it possesses. He often draws the reader's attention to the exquisiteness of the *naẓm* of this or that verse,[38] and criticizes certain interpretations of Qur'ānic verses if, in his view, they violate the *naẓm* of the Qur'ān.[39]

Rāzī's method of establishing *naẓm* in a Qur'ānic sūrah consists in showing how verse 1 of the sūrah leads to verse 2, how verse 2 is related to verse 3, and so on until an unbroken linear connection between all the verses of the sūrah is established. Sometimes Rāzī seeks to connect sūrahs in similar fashion. Not infrequently, he suggests two or more types of connections (not always mutually

[34] The second chapter of *Burhān*, in which this discussion takes place, is entitled "Maʿrifat Munāsabāt bayn al-Āyāt".

[35] Ibid., 1:37.

[36] Ibid., 1:38.

[37] Ibid., 1:36.

[38] See for example, Rāzī, 9:219; 10:140.

[39] See, for example, ibid., 6:14-15, 83; 9:189; 24:176.

reconcilable) between verses.[40] Thus he may give his own explanation of the *naẓm* connection and, at the same time, adduce a *sabab an-nuzūl* that links up the verses in question. It should be noted, however, that Rāzī does not hesitate to reject a *sabab an-nuzūl* if it appears to him to be in clear contradiction of the *naẓm* interpretation he himself has arrived at, though this does not often happen.

Rāzī uses a number of expressions synonymously with *naẓm*. The ones he uses most frequently are: *munāsabah*;[41] *wajh an-naẓm huwa annahū* . . .[42] ("the explanation of the *naẓm* is as follows . . ."); *taʿalluq hādhihī l-āyati bi mā qablahā huwa* . . .[43] ("this verse is related to the preceding verse in the following manner . . ."); and *lammā* with perfect verb followed by perfect verb ("after [elucidating such-and-such a point], [God] now [follows it up with this point]").

Rāzī's attempt to see *munāsabah* between the Qur'ānic verses—and, in some cases, sūrahs—was followed by similar attempts by a number of other scholars, perhaps most notably by these four exegetes: Niẓām ad-Dīn ibn al-Ḥasan al-Qummī an-Nīsābūrī (d. 728/1327); Abū ʿAbd Allāh Athīr ad-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf (654-745/1256-1344), known as Abū Ḥayyān; Shams ad-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ash-Shirbīnī (d. 977/1569); and Abū th-Thanā' Shihāb ad-Dīn Maḥmūd as-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Ālūsī (1217-1270/1802-1854). These writers borrow heavily from Rāzī, taking over from him not only his method but also the formulaic expressions he uses to express his idea of *naẓm*. Of these four, Nīsābūrī is probably the most dependent upon Rāzī,[44] though he represents an advance over Rāzī in that he does not content himself with connecting individual verses to one another, but, typically, divides a sūrah into a number of passages and tries to link up these passages by connecting the dominant ideas in them. Abū Ḥayyān in this respect follows Rāzī. Shirbīnī did not, it seems, originally plan to explain Qur'ānic *naẓm*, and there is no significant mention of it in his commentary on the early part of the Qur'ān. However, by the time he reaches the middle of the Qur'ān, *naẓm* has

[40] See, for example, ibid., 10:116, 209; 11:6, 32, 89.

[41] See, for example, ibid., 9:158; 28:193.

[42] See, for example, ibid., 10:105.

[43] See, for example, ibid., 10:205; 11:42, 57-58, 60, 69-70.

[44] For Nīsābūrī's acknowledgement of his debt to Rāzī, see Nīsābūrī, 1:8.

become an established principle with Shirbīnī. Ālūsī, while he is mindful of the general context in which certain verses occur and often makes this general context the criterion for determining the merit of a particular interpretation, does not take pains to establish an unbroken link between all the verses of a sūrah. He, however, excels the other writers of this category when it comes to establishing connections between sūrahs. For, unlike the others, who connect two sūrahs by connecting the closing verses of the one sūrah and the opening verses of the other, Ālūsi offers concrete points of comparison between sūrahs taken as wholes. But neither Rāzī nor any of the other four writers seeks to establish links between all the sūrahs.

We may conclude that the *naẓm* these writers seek to establish is linear in character and has a bearing chiefly on individual sūrahs. But, in their preoccupation with what we have called the larger units of the Qur'ān, these scholars have further developed the concept of *naẓm*. And while they seek to establish *naẓm* between the verses of a given sūrah, and sometimes between several sūrahs, these scholars continue to discuss *naẓm* in the sense of ideal word-meaning relationships. This means that their *naẓm* view, rather than being opposed to the *naẓm* view of the scholars of the first category, incorporates it and builds upon it.

Modern Authors

The issue of Qur'ānic *naẓm* has continued to intrigue Muslim scholars in present times. These scholars have tried to come to grips with the issue either in response to Western scholars' criticism of the Qur'ān as a disjointed, unsystematic work, or with the aim of providing more satisfactory solutions to the *naẓm* question than have hitherto been offered, or in order to investigate an area considered not only legitimate but important in modern literary theory. The three types of motivation are of course not absolutely distinct from each other, and one might detect the presence of all three in a writer's approach to the problem.

Before proceeding further, we should note that, in expounding the elements of *naẓm* in the Qur'ān, not all modern scholars use expressions like *naẓm* or *munāsabah*. This, however, is not a crucial matter. As long as these scholars are concerned with the issue of *naẓm* in its essential sense, that is, as long as they attempt to see the Qur'ān as a work marked by coherence, then, irrespective of whether they use certain specific expressions or not, their views will be germane to our study.

We will select three modern writers for discussion: Abū l-Aᶜlā Mawdūdī, Muḥammad Maḥmūd Ḥijāzī[45], and Fazlur Rahman (b. 1338/1919). The views of two other writers will come in for treatment in chapter IV.

1. *Mawdūdī*. Mawdūdī is fully aware that a modern reader of the Qur'ān is likely to become perplexed by the way the Qur'ān presents itself. The Qur'ān does not classify its subjects into self-contained chapters, but in the same breath speaks of matters legal, historical, political, philosophical, and ethical. This apparent lack of coherence leaves the reader with the impression that the Qur'ān is a poorly arranged work.[46]

After granting that the problem is likely to arise, and in an acute form, Mawdūdī suggests that it can be solved with reference to the subject, purpose, and central thesis of the Qur'ān. The subject of the Qur'ān is man and his salvation; the central theme is the "right attitude" that man ought to adopt toward God, the universe, and life; the purpose is to invite man to adopt this attitude.[47] The Qur'ān, Mawdūdī says, never draws away from its subject, never forgets its purpose, and never abandons its fundamental thesis.[48] Moreover, the Qur'ān was revealed in bits and pieces over a period of twenty-three years, and so one cannot expect to find in it the plan of a doctoral dissertation.[49] Still further, the original, revelatory arrangement of the Qur'ān, which answered the needs of the time of the Prophet, was changed by the Prophet because it would not have been suitable for later times.[50]

This is an ingenious response to the charge of incoherence in the Qur'ān. There is, however, a problem with this response. For it is not enough to say that the Qur'ān always sticks to its subject, purpose, and basic thesis. A book of quotations on a subject may meet the same criteria, and yet the unity of such a book will be of a very different kind from the unity of a book that offers a systematic treatment of a subject. Moreover, if the Qur'ān meets the above-

[45]I have not been able to ascertain Ḥijāzī's dates.

[46]Mawdūdī, 1:13-15.

[47]Ibid., 1:19-20.

[48]Ibid., 1:20.

[49]Ibid., 1:25.

[50]Ibid., 1:26-27.

stated criteria, then it would continue to meet them no matter what arrangement it is given. But the real question is not whether the Qur'ānic material, irrespective of what arrangement it is given, continues to have coherence or not, but whether, with the arrangement it actually has, it possesses coherence or not. To this question Mawdūdī does not address himself.

And yet Mawdūdī's response has its value. For one thing, Mawdūdī, as a representative modern Muslim thinker, shows a sharp awareness of the problem. For another, his solution to the problem, even though it may be vulnerable in the form in which he presents it, can probably be made, through a close analysis of what Mawdūdī calls the Qur'ānic subject, purpose, and central thesis, the basis of a more plausible solution.

2. *Ḥijāzī*. Ḥijāzī claims to be the first to have presented the notion of "topical unity" in the Qur'ān. In his *Al-Waḥdah al-Mawḍūᶜiyyah fī l-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, after acknowledging the efforts of earlier scholars to see interrelationships *(munāsabāt)* between Qur'ānic verses and sūrahs,[51] he writes:

> However, none of the earlier exegetes has attempted to collect all the verses on one topic, arrange them according to their chronological sequence, and, considering the occasions of revelation and the suitability of the verses in the sūrahs they occur in, attempted to study the verses in a thorough, systematic manner with a view to arriving at a complete and unbroken topical unity.[52]

What Ḥijāzī is saying is that, besides the *naẓm* of the verses and sūrahs of the Qur'ān, there is another type of *naẓm* to be found in the Qur'ān, one that scholars have failed to notice. This *naẓm*, Ḥijāzī contends, is brought out only when all the Qur'ānic verses on a given subject are brought together and studied in their chronological order.

Apart from the fact that Ḥijāzī offers a rather meager amount of evidence to substantiate his thesis (he gives only three examples,

[51]Ḥijāzī, p. 23.

[52]Ibid., p. 25. See also ibid., pp. 31, 33-34, 54, 60, 95, 125.

which are not truly representative[53]), there is a basic flaw in his theory: it places too heavy a reliance on the occasions of revelation. For one thing, it is well-nigh impossible to say with certainty that a given *sabab an-nuzūl* in fact occasioned the revelation of a certain verse. Furthermore, because of the problems attendant upon taking a strictly historical view of the occasions of revelation, Muslim scholars sometimes interpret an occasion of revelation to mean not an actual historical event but any situation to which a given Qur'ānic verse might have application.[54] But this shift of emphasis from the *historicity* of the occasions to their *applicability* does not augur well for Ḥijāzī's theory, which is predicated on a *historical* view of them.

Ḥijāzī's attempt to see a certain type of *naẓm* in the Qur'ān would thus yield results of questionable value. Yet it is significant that he tries to place a historical perspective on the issue and offers a critique, howsoever brief, of the *naẓm* views of earlier writers. In other words, he would like to place himself in what he seems to regard as a more or less well-established tradition of *naẓm* interpretation of the Qur'ān. For it should be clear by now that a *naẓm* tradition in Qur'ān exegesis does exist, a fact not appreciated generally.

3. *Fazlur Rahman.* The Qur'ān, Fazlur Rahman says, possesses a "cohesive outlook on the universe and life."[55] It inculcates "a definite weltanschauung" and "its teaching has 'no inner contradictions' but coheres as a whole."[56] But "little attempt has ever been made to understand the Qur'ān as a unity,"[57] there having been "a general failure to understand the underlying unity of the Qur'ān,

[53]The three examples are: divinity of God (ibid., pp. 134 ff.), wine and usury (ibid., pp. 257), and the story of Moses (ibid., pp. 325 ff.). These examples, especially the first two, are not truly representative because they pertain to subjects about which sufficient background historical material is available, something that cannot be said of a large number of other Qur'ānic subjects. Ḥijāzī's definition of a "topic" is not quite precise either: usury and wine form a topic in themselves, and so does the story of Moses. But with this definition of a topic, the Qur'ān may be said to have hundreds and thousands of topics. For these hundreds and thousands of topics—and they would include not only familiar historical events but also abstract notions and concepts of all kinds—there are hardly any occasions of revelation available.

[54]Zarkashī, 1:31-32.

[55]Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes,* p. xi.

[56]*Islam and Modernity,* p. 6.

[57]Ibid.

coupled with a practical insistence upon fixing on the words of various verses in isolation."[58] Fazlur Rahman is very critical of this "piecemeal, ad hoc, and often quite extrinsic treatment of the Qur'ān."[59] For a study of the Qur'ān as a unity, he proposes a hermeneutical method that consists of "a double movement, from the present situation to Qur'ānic times, then back to the present,"[60] Fazlur Rahman thus rejects the "piecemeal" approach to the Qur'ān and advocates a holistic approach. But although he conceives of the Qur'ān as a unity, he does so in *thematic* terms only,[61] and does not look for any structural unity or coherence in the received arrangement of the Qur'ān. In fact, he emphasizes the need to make a "systematic attempt . . . to understand the Qur'ān in the order in which it was revealed . . . ,"[62] a view that by implication dismisses the idea that the existing Qur'ānic arrangement is significant.

This rounds off our brief survey of the historical development of the idea of *naẓm* in the Qur'ān. But even this survey makes it sufficiently clear that the concept of Qur'ānic *naẓm* has a fairly long history. Beginning as an appendage to the issue of Qur'ānic *iʿjāz,* the notion of *naẓm* in the Qur'ān evolves to become a subject of interest in itself. The shift of emphasis is very evident in Jurjānī, who, it will be recalled, cites plenty of verses from Arabic poetry but relatively few Qur'ānic verses. With him, one might say, a theological issue is transformed into a literary issue. With modern writers, the connection between *iʿjāz* and *naẓm* is further loosened.

[58]Ibid., p. 2.

[59]Ibid., p. 4. See also ibid., pp. 2-3; and *Major Themes,* p. xii.

[60]*Islam and Modernity,* p. 5. For a fuller treatment of the subject, see ibid., pp. 5-11, 17-20—with p. 20 providing a summary statement of the method. According to Fazlur Rahman, "Although the method I have advocated here is new in form, nevertheless its elements are all traditional." Ibid., p. 143. See also ibid., p. 145.

[61]In his *Major Themes,* Fazlur Rahman, using a "logical rather than chronological" procedure, attempts to offer a "synthetic exposition of Qur'ānic themes." See *Major Themes,* p. xi.

[62]*Islam and Modernity,* p. 144. Fazlur Rahman clarifies, however, that what he recommends is "studying the Qur'ān in its total and specific background (and doing this study systematically in a historical order), not just studying it verse by verse or passage by passage with an isolated 'occasion of revelation' (sha'n al-nuzūl) [*sic*]." Ibid., p. 145. The "total" background of the Qur'ān is the general sociohistorical context in which the Qur'ān was revealed; the "specific" background consists of the specific contexts of specific Qur'ānic texts. Ibid., p. 143. See also ibid., p. 6.

Also, we can see a more or less logical progression in the *naẓm* ideas of the writers. The views of the second category of traditional scholars represent an advance over the views of the scholars of the first category. And although the views of modern writers differ significantly from those of traditional writers taken as a group, the former's preoccupation with thematic coherence in the Qur'ān is perhaps not entirely unrelated to the latter's "word-meaning relationship" or "linear connection."

But none of the authors that we have discussed, traditional or modern, present the Qur'ān as a book that possesses thematic *and* structural *naẓm* at the same time.

This defines for us the task that Iṣlāḥī sets himself in *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān,* namely, to show that the Qur'ān possesses structural as well as thematic coherence, and that this coherence exists in the Qur'ān in complex but regular and interwoven patterns. Thus, although the pivotal concept in Iṣlāḥī carries the name of *naẓm,* the term *naẓm* in Iṣlāḥī acquires a meaning radically different from the ones we have so far encountered. But first we should take a look at the *naẓm* framework constructed by Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī. That *naẓm* framework is the subject of our next chapter.

Summary

The concept of Qur'ānic *naẓm* has a fairly long history. Arising in connection with the discussion on Qur'ānic *iʿjāz,* the concept originally referred to the Qur'ān's inimitable way of relating words to meanings. Next it was interpreted to mean a linear connection between Qur'ānic verses and sūrahs, although even at this stage scholars continued to discuss the word-meaning relationship the Qur'ān seeks to establish. Modern writers, to the extent that Mawdūdī, Ḥijāzī, and Fazlur Rahman can be taken as representing them, emphasize aspects of thematic unity in the Qur'ān.

Chapter II

NAẒM ACCORDING TO FARĀHĪ AND IṢLĀḤĪ

In this chapter a general discussion of Iṣlāḥī's exegetical principles will be followed by a treatment of the most salient principle used by him in *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān,* namely, the principle of *naẓm.*

Exegetical Principles

Essentially, Iṣlāḥī subscribes to the principles of exegesis laid down by Farāhī, but he presents them more methodically. The following treatment is, therefore, summarized from the Introduction to *Tadabbur.* The places where Farāhī's own discussion of them is to be found are indicated in the notes. Since the focus in the present work is on the *naẓm* principle as understood by Iṣlāḥī, and Iṣlāḥī's views on *naẓm* sometimes differ from Farāhī's, a separate section points out the differences between the two writers. But first a brief note. One of the words Iṣlāḥī uses for "principles" of exegesis is *wasā'il*[1] (literally, "means, sources"). In the following paragraphs, the word "principles" is used as an equivalent of *wasā'il.*

Statement

Iṣlāḥī divides the principles of Qur'ān exegesis into two types, those that are internal to the Qur'ān and those that are external. The internal principles are three in number: Qur'ānic language, Qur'ānic *naẓm,* and Qur'ānic *naẓā'ir* ("parallels").[2]

A deep knowledge of pre-Islamic Arabic is of the utmost importance. In point of idiom, structure, and style that Arabic differs markedly from modern Arabic, and one must have a good command of it before one can fully understand the Qur'ānic style and method of presentation. In fact, one must be thoroughly familiar with the entire range of pre-Islamic literature, for that literature is an accurate mirror of the Arabian society against whose backdrop the Qur'ān was revealed.[3]

Naẓm is a fundamental characteristic of the Qur'ān. The

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[1] Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 1:i.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., 1:ii-v. Farāhī, *Majmūʿah,* p. 42.

Qur'ān, that is to say, is a very well-structured book. It is a known fact that the Qur'ānic arrangement, fixed as it was by Muḥammad himself,[4] does not reflect the chronological arrangement of the revelations. There must, therefore, be a special *ḥikmah* or wisdom in the rearranging of the Qur'ān. Hence the importance of *naẓm*, for a study of Qur'ānic *naẓm* brings out that *ḥikmah*.[5]

By providing abundant thematic and other kinds of parallels, the Qur'ān explains itself. What is unclear in one verse is made clear in another, what is brief in one sūrah is elaborated elsewhere. The best guide to the Qur'ān is the Qur'ān itself.[6]

These three internal principles, together with one of the external principles, that of the *Sunnah mutawātirah* (see below), are the *qaṭʿī* ("categorical") principles, while the rest are *ẓannī* ("non-categorical"; literally, "conjectural") principles. The former are primary and irreducible, and suffice for the purpose of arriving at the basic Qur'ān interpretation. The latter are secondary in importance, are theoretically dispensable, and should be used only when they are in accord with, or at least do not contradict, the former.[7]

There are six external principles: *Sunnah mutawātirah*, *Ḥadīth*, *asbāb an-nuzūl*, earlier Qur'ān commentaries, previous scriptures, and ancient Arab history.

The Prophet's normative practice, when it is transmitted by such a large number of people that the possibility of its being falsely attributed to him is excluded, is known as the *Sunnah mutawātirah* ("universally known practice"; literally, "practice that is transmitted widely and with unbroken chains of narrators"). The *Sunnah mutawātirah* provides the only authoritative interpretation of the large number of terms that the Qur'ān uses technically but does not always explain, terms like *ṣalāh* ("ritual prayer"), *zakāh* ("welfare

[4]Muslim writers, while they agree that Muḥammad supervised the arrangement of the verses into sūrahs, disagree on who was responsible for the arrangement of the sūrahs themselves. See Shawkānī, 2:352-353. Farāhī is of the view that the sūrahs, too, were given their present arrangement by Muḥammad and provides arguments to that effect. *Dalā'il*, pp. 13-14, 40, n. Iṣlāḥī holds the same view. As we shall [illegible] in chapter VII, the Farāhī-Iṣlāḥī concept of *naẓm* has a bearing on the question of who arranged the Qur'ān.

[5]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 1:v. Farāhī, *Dalā'il*, pp. 34 ff.

[6]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 1:xv-xvi. Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, p. 35.

[7]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 1:i-ii, xvi. Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, pp. 35-39.

due"), *ṣawm* ("fasting"), *ḥajj* ("pilgrimage"), *ʿumrah* ("lesser pilgrimage"), *ṭawāf* ("circumambulation").[8]

As a principle of interpretation, the *Ḥadīth* ("Tradition") of Muḥammad—and Iṣlāḥī brackets with *Ḥadīth* the *āthār* of Muḥammad's Companions, that is, the reports about the Companions' religious conduct—is invaluable. But it does not compare in authenticity with the *Sunnah mutawātirah*, and is, therefore, *ẓannī* in character.[9]

The *asbāb an-nuzūl* should be derived from the Qur'ān insomuch as possible, and historical events and incidents should be cited, and then in their essential form, only when the Qur'ān itself refers or alludes to them[10] (see below).

The existing Qur'ān commentaries should not be used as a primary source of exegesis, though they may be used for corroborative purposes, that is, for confirming an interpretation reached through the use of *qaṭʿī* principles.[11]

The Qur'ānic references to the previous scriptures (which for practical purposes are the Old Testament and the New Testament) should be explained through a critical study of the Bible itself. That is to say, one should not set much store by the accounts that Muslim scholars in their works provide of them, for these accounts are largely based on hearsay and carry conviction neither with Jews and Christians nor with Muslims themselves.[12]

Ancient Arab history helps one in understanding the Qur'ānic references to the pre-Islamic Arab peoples. But sufficient historical information on the subject is lacking. For such information, therefore, one has to depend largely on the Qur'ān itself.[13]

[8]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 1:xvi-xvii. Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, pp. 41-42.

[9]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 1:xvii-xviii. Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, pp. 39, 40, 41.

[10]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 1:xviii-xix. Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, pp. 37-39.

[11]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 1:xix-xx. Farāhī does not mention this as an exegetical principle, if "principle" it may be called. But the fact that in his *Majmūʿah* he refers (if occasionally) to other commentaries only to cite support for an interpretation he himself has reached on the basis of *qaṭʿī* principles indicates that Iṣlāḥī merely gave explicit form to a principle that was implicit in Farāhī's writings. See *Majmūʿah*, p. 47.

[12]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 1:xx. Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, p. 40.

[13]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 1:xx-xxi. Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, pp. 39-40.

Comparison with the Traditional Set of Principles

A comparison of the above-stated principles with the principles of exegesis held by traditional Muslim scholars will point up many differences.

The *Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl at-Tafsīr* of Taqī ad-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymiyyah (662-728/1262-1327) is a representative work in the field of Qur'ānic exegetical theory. Ibn Taymiyyah lists the following as the principles of Qur'ān interpretation: Qur'ānic parallels,[14] the *Sunnah* of Muḥammad,[15] the sayings of his Companions[16] (the *asbāb an-nuzūl* are apparently subsumed by Ibn Taymiyyah under these sayings[17]), and the sayings of the Successors to the Companions.[18] What is known as *tafsīr bi r-ra'y* ("use of personal opinion in exegesis") is disallowed by Ibn Taymiyyah.[19] Knowledge of Arabic is of course assumed by him.

Zarkashī in his *Burhān* gives a fairly similar description of the principles of Qur'ān interpretation. The major exegetical principles are four: the sayings of Muḥammad,[20] the sayings of the Companions (who have first-hand knowledge of the *asbāb an-nuzūl*)[21] and of the Successors,[22] knowledge of Arabic,[23] and opinion.[24] Zarkashī hastens to point out that by "opinion" he does not mean *tafsīr bi r-*

[14]Ibn Taymiyyah, pp. 93, 94.

[15]Ibid., pp. 93-94.

[16]Ibid., pp. 95 ff.

[17]Ibid., pp. 48-49, 95-96.

[18]Ibid., pp. 102-105.

[19]Ibid., pp. 105-108. For a brief discussion of *tafsīr bi r-ra'y*, see Abū Zahrah, pp. 596-603; and Jullandri, pp. 81, 86 ff. I do not, however, agree with Jullandri when he calls *tafsīr bi r-ra'y* "rational commentary," for this is a loaded expression and implies that *tafsīr bi l-ma'thūr* ("traditionist commentary") lacks the element of reasoning. He presents the Muʿtazilah as the free-thinkers of Islam, but this view has now generally been discarded. See, for example, Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, p. 88, and Aḥmad Amīn, *Ẓuhr al-Islām* (4 vols.; Cairo: Maktabat an-Nahḍah al-Miṣriyyah, 1372/1952), 4:7.

[20]Zarkashī, 2:156-157.

[21]Ibid., 2:157.

[22]Ibid., 2:158-159

[23]Ibid., 2:160.

[24]Ibid., 2:161.

ra'y but opinion that is informed by wisdom with which God endows a person like the Companion ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās (1st/7th century). Muḥammad specially prayed to God that He might bless Ibn ʿAbbās with wisdom in religious and Qur'ānic matters.[25]

Speaking overall, the major difference between the Ibn Taymiyyah-Zarkashī set of principles and the Farāhī-Iṣlāḥī set of principles is that the former is a continuum, while there is, in the latter, a clear break between two kinds of principles. In Ibn Taymiyyah-Zarkashī, the principles are arranged in diminishing order of importance: the second principle will be used where the first cannot be used, the third where the second cannot be, and so on.[26] In Farāhī-Iṣlāḥī, on the other hand, a sharp contrast is made between *qaṭʿī* and *ẓannī* principles, and the difference between the two is one of kind, not simply one of degree.

Comparison between individual principles from the two formulations will bring out other differences. First of all, to Ibn Taymiyyah and Zarkashī, the sayings of Muḥammad's Companions are an independent exegetical source. Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī bracket the Companions' sayings with *Ḥadīth* and treat them accordingly. Unlike Zarkashī and Ibn Taymiyyah, they do not consider the sayings of the Successors as an independent source of exegesis.

Second, Zarkashī does not mention the *asbāb an-nuzūl* as an independent exegetical principle, but puts it under "the sayings of the Companions," and Ibn Taymiyyah appears to do the same.[27] But both of them attach great value to *asbāb an-nuzūl* as an aid to understanding the Qur'ān.[28] Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī mention them as a principle, but interpret them differently. *Asbāb an-nuzūl*, as historically understood, lose much of their importance in these two writers, for they insist that the *sabab an-nuzūl*, of a Qur'ānic sūrah for example, should be derived from the Qur'ān itself. Just as a physician can look at a prescription and identify the ailment for which it was intended, so should a scholar, by closely studying a sūrah, be able to figure out its *sabab an-nuzūl*. Only in cases where the Qur'ān refers or alludes to specific incidents should one look outside the sūrah for the *sabab an-nuzūl*. Thus, in Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī, the *asbāb*

[25]Ibid.

[26]See, for example, Ibn Taymiyyah, pp. 93 ff.

[27]Zarkashī, 2:157. See also n. 17 above.

[28]Ibn Taymiyyah, pp. 47-49. Zarkashī, 1:22-34.

an-nuzūl are redefined to become, mainly, a feature internal to the Qur'ān and cease to be something that is superimposed on the Qur'ān.

But the most important difference between Ibn Taymiyyah and Zarkahī on the one hand and Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī on the other is that while the latter believe the Qur'ān to be possessed of a highly significant *naẓm*, the former do not raise the issue at all. In the last chapter we noted that the question of Qur'ānic *naẓm* had begun to be discussed by the end of the 2nd/8th century, that the extant works dealing with Qur'ānic *naẓm* date at least from the 4th/10th century, and that already in the 6th/12th century Rāzī had made extensive use of the *naẓm* principle as he understood it. But neither Ibn Taymiyyah nor Zarkashī gives any consideration to *naẓm* as a likely exegetical principle. Even after Zarkashī and Ibn Taymiyyah, as we saw, a number of Qur'ān commentators used a *naẓm* approach to the Qur'ān. And yet not until Farāhī was *naẓm* raised to the status of a regular principle of exegesis. The next section will present the views of Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī on *naẓm*.

The *Naẓm* Principle

To Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī, the principle of *naẓm* is indispensable; Farāhī calls it the first and foremost of all exegetical principles,[29] and the most distinguishing feature of Iṣlāḥī's *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, of course, is no other.[30]

Arguments for the Presence of Naẓm in the Qur'ān

Several arguments may be presented to show that the Qur'ān is possessed of *naẓm*.[31]

First, a number of Muslim scholars (Rāzī, for example) have held that the Qur'ān possesses *naẓm*. Although none of these scholars were able to give a satisfactory explanation of Qur'ānic *naẓm*,

[29]Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, p. 35.

[30]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 8:8.

[31]The arguments are offered by Farāhī, but the order in which they are here presented is taken from Iṣlāḥī's *Mabādi-yi Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*. References to the places in which they are treated in Farāhī's writings and Iṣlāḥī's Introduction to *Tadabbur* will be added in the notes.

yet the idea that the Qur'ān has *naẓm* obviously has a history of its own.[32]

Second, scholars who have denied the existence of *naẓm* in the Qur'ān have done so not because they were fully convinced that the Qur'ān lacks *naẓm*, but because they were only partially successful in unraveling that *naẓm*. Unable to prove that the *whole* of the Qur'ān possessed *naẓm*, they denied that *naẓm* was present in *any part* of it. In so doing, they were trying to maintain a consistent view about the matter, but that does not mean that the Qur'ān is without *naẓm*.[33]

Third, the chronological arrangement of the Qur'ān was drastically changed by Muḥammad, a proof that the new arrangement must have a *ḥikmah* that would have been lost had the original arrangement been preserved.[34]

Fourth, the order in which the sūrahs are arranged in the Qur'ān is evidently not determined by the rule of decreasing length, a rule that would have come in handy if the Qur'ān had lacked *naẓm*. One must, therefore, find another way to account for the fact that short sūrahs sometimes follow but sometimes also precede longer sūrahs. It is *naẓm* that supplies the needed explanation.[35]

Lastly, no sensible discourse may lack *naẓm* or coherence. It is indeed surprising that the Qur'ān, a book of proven inimitability, should be thought to be marked by incoherence.[36]

These arguments do not clinch the matter in favor of the particular Farāhī-Iṣlāḥī view of Qur'ānic *naẓm*. They do suggest, however, that it is erroneous to regard the Qur'ān as a book that lacks *naẓm* completely or has a superficial *naẓm* The arguments that make this suggestion most forcefully are the last four. But they will remain suggestions unless concrete evidence in support of them is presented from the Qur'ān itself. In chapter III we shall see whether the evidence presented by Farāhī (and later by Iṣlāḥī) is compelling or not.

[32]Iṣlāḥī, *Mabādī*, pp. 174-176; *Tadabbur*, 1:v-vii. Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, pp. 29-30.

[33]Iṣlāḥī, *Mabādī*, pp. 176-178; *Tadabbur*, 1:v. Farāhī, *Dalā'il*, p. 23.

[34]Iṣlāḥī, *Mabādī*, pp. 177-178; *Tadabbur*, 1:v-vii. Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, pp. 32-33. See also n. 4 above.

[35]Iṣlāḥī, *Mabādī*, pp. 179-180; *Tadabbur*, 1:v. Farāhī, *Dalā'il*, p. 93.

[36]Iṣlāḥī, *Mabādī*, pp. 182-183; *Tadabbur*, 1:v. Farāhī, *Dalā'il*, pp. 21-22, 39.

Nature of Qur'ānic Naẓm

Farāhī draws a distinction between other scholars' concept of *naẓm* and his own. "Other scholars" in this context are those who hold to what in chapter I was called "linear *naẓm*." But the point to note is that Farāhī uses the word *munāsabah* to describe the view of these scholars and reserves the word *naẓm* for his own. That is to say, even when these writers discuss what they call *naẓm*, they are, in Farāhī'■ view, dealing with no more than *munāsabah*, which forms only one part of his own concept of *naẓm*. Farāhī distinguishes between the two terms in the following way:

> A few scholars have written about the *tanāsub* [=*munāsabah*] between the [Qur'ānic] verses and sūrahs, but as for the *niẓām* [=*naẓm*] of the Qur'ān, I do not know [of anyone having written about it]. The difference between the two is that *tanāsub* is a part of *niẓām*. *Tanāsub* between its verses would not show the [Qur'ānic] discourse to be a unified entity in its own right. The seeker of *tanāsub* often contents himself with any kind of *munāsabah* [he can think of].[37]

Thus, according to Farāhī, *tanāsub* or *munāsabah* simply means the linking up of the sentences of a discourse in disregard of the possibility that the discourse is more than the sum total of its constituent sentences. To look for such *tanāsub* or *munāsabah* in the Qur'ān is, in Farāhī's view, to take ■ fragmentary approach since, at any step in this search for *munāsabah*, the whole is ignored for the details, the wood lost for the trees.

After making this distinction between *naẓm* and *munāsabah*, Farāhī further explains what he means by *naẓm* or *niẓām*:

> In brief, by *niẓām* we mean that a sūrah be ■ totality, and also be related with the sūrah that precedes it and the one that follows it, or with that which precedes or follows it at one remove. . . . On the score of this principle, the entire Qur'ān will be seen to be a single discourse, all of it■ parts, from start to finish, being well-ordered and well-knit.[38]

Farāhī concludes by saying that "*niẓām* is something over and above *munāsabah* and *tartīb* ['sequential order']."[39] This "something

[37] Farāhī, *Dalā'il*, p. 74.

[38] Ibid., p. 75.

[39] Ibid.

over and above" he calls *waḥdāniyyah*[40] ("unity"). He then remarks that the three key elements of *naẓm* are *tartīb*, *tanāsub*, and *waḥdāniyyah*.[41] But at this point Farāhī puts ■ different construction on the word *tanāsub*. Until now he has used it in the sense of simple "linkage," contrasting it with *naẓm*. But now he uses it in the sense of "proportion." Also, the word *tartīb*, which means "order," is now given the meaning that was originally carried by *tanāsub*, namely, "linkage."[42] As for *waḥdāniyyah*, it imparts unity to ■ discourse, making it ■ whole that is more than the sum total of its parts. According to Farāhī, the element of *waḥdāniyyah* is missing from the other scholars' concept of *naẓm*. That is why he describes their concept as the concept of *munāsabah* and his own as that of *naẓm*. To sum up, ■ discourse will possess *naẓm* when it has *tartīb*, *tanāsub*, and *waḥdāniyyah*, that is, when it is well-ordered, well-proportioned, and well-unified.

Importance of Naẓm

In chapter I we saw that, to Rāzī, Qur'ānic *naẓm* is significant because it brings to light many *laṭā'if* or "subtleties" of the Qur'ān. According to Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī, *naẓm* does not simply bring out the subtleties of thought and niceties of expression in the Qur'ān, it

[40] Ibid., p. 76.

[41] Ibid., p. 77.

[42] The changed meaning of the word *tanāsub* will be apparent from ■ comparison of the following two statements (here left untranslated) by Farāhī. The first runs: *Fa tabayyna min mā qaddamnā anna n-niẓāma shay'un zā'idun ᶜalā l-munāsabati wa tartībi l-ajzā'i. . . . Dalā'il*, p. 75. Farāhī makes this statement after drawing a distinc- tion between *naẓm* and *munāsabah*. This being the context of the statement, it can be inferred that Farāhī here uses the word *munāsaba* interchangeably with *tanāsub*, the two thus denoting simple "linkage," and both being opposed to *niẓām*, which would denote ■■ organic type of relationship. But now consider the second statement: *Fa ammā idhā rāᶜayta ḥusna t-tartībi wa l-munāsabati fī taqdīmi l-abwābi baᶜḍihā ᶜalā baᶜḍin wa maᶜa dhālika jaᶜalta l-kalāma fī kulli bābin bayānan wāḥidan jāriyan ilā mawḍūᶜihī maᶜa tanāsubin fī ajzā'i l-kalāmi ṣāra l-kitābu dhā niẓāmin kāmilin. Wa bi l-jumlati fa lā budda li ḥusni n-niẓāmi min* ■■ *yakūna l-kalāmu ḥasana t-tartībi ḥasana t-tanāsubi qawiyya l-waḥdāniyyati*. Ibid., p. 77. Whereas *tanāsub* was in the first state- ment interchangeable with *munāsabah*, it is no longer so in this one, but has rather been used in the sense of "proportion." The word *tartīb*, too, as can be seen, and as will be confirmed by a look at the three paragraphs that precede this statement in *Dalā'il*, here not only means "order," but also takes on the meaning of *munāsabah* or *tanāsub*, that is, "linkage, connection." The inconsistent usage is probably explained by the fact that, like many others of Farāhī's works, *Dalā'il* was compiled by Farāhī's students from his more or less scattered notes.

forms an integral part of the essential meaning or message of the Qur'ān. Qur'ānic *naẓm* is important because it provides the only key to the proper understanding of the Qur'ān. Upon reading the Qur'ān without the guiding light of *naẓm,* one will at best acquire knowledge of a few isolated injunctions or pronouncements of the Qur'ān. It is *naẓm* that, by furnishing an integrated view of the Qur'ān, throws new light on every verse. A chemical compound is much more than a simple combination of its constituent substances. Without *naẓm* the Qur'ān is no more than an aggregate of verses and sūrahs; with *naẓm* it is transmuted into a real unity.[43]

But how would Qur'ānic *naẓm* furnish the only key to the proper understanding of the Qur'ān? Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī would reply: by placing the Qur'ānic verses in an ineluctable context. Multiple (and often contradictory) interpretations of Qur'ānic verses are due to the fact that the verses are taken out of context. By putting every verse in its context, *naẓm* would eliminate the possibility of wayward interpretations. In a word, adherence to the *naẓm* principle would make for a definitive interpretation of the Qur'ān.[44]

Farāhī's Scheme of Naẓm

We shall now outline Farāhī's scheme of *naẓm,* and also note the modifications that Iṣlāḥī makes to it.

The basic *naẓm* unit in the Qur'ān is the sūrah. Every sūrah has a central theme called *ᶜamūd* (see next chapter), around which the entire sūrah revolves. The *ᶜamūd* is the unifying thread in the sūrah, and the sūrah is to be interpreted with reference to it.[45]

Not only is every sūrah a unity, there is a logical link between all the sūrahs as they follow one another in the present Qur'ānic arrangement.[46] The sūrahs fall into nine groups, and each group is, like a sūrah, a unity.[47] Every group begins with a Makkan sūrah and ends with a Madīnan sūrah.[48]

A sūrah may have parenthetical verses in it, which means that

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[43]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 1:viii-ix. Farāhī, *Dalā'il,* pp. 17-19, 75, n.

[44]Farāhī, *Takmīl,* p. 20; *Dalā'il,* p. 25. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 1:x.

[45]Farāhī, *Dalā'il,* pp. 73, 77, 82.

[46]Ibid., pp. 83-84.

[47]Ibid., pp. 92-93.

[48]Ibid., p. 91.

sometimes its verses will be connected with one another at one or several removes.[49] In a sūrah group, likewise, there may be a sūrah that is supplementary to the preceding one, which means that two sūrahs may be connected with each other at one remove.[50]

Modifications and Additions by Iṣlāḥī

Essentially, Iṣlāḥī takes over the design of Qur'ānic *naẓm* as presented by Farāhī. But he makes a few changes in it.

First, he classifies the sūrahs into seven rather than nine groups.[51] Further, he regards all sūrahs, with the exception of a few, as paired.[52] The important point is that, for the seven-fold division and for the sūrah-pairing, Iṣlāḥī seeks to adduce evidence from the Qur'ān itself. In a later chapter we will examine this evidence.

Second, according to Iṣlāḥī, in each of the seven sūrah groups, the Makkan and Madīnan sūrahs form distinct blocs, with the Makkan bloc preceding the Madīnan. That is, the Makkan bloc contains no Madīnan sūrah and the Madīnan bloc contains no Makkan sūrah.[53] This distinction, as we shall see in chapter VI, is significant in the eyes of Iṣlāḥī. Farāhī does not insist on this distinction. For example, in his 8th sūrah group, which consists of Ss. 67-112, Ss. 67-109 are called Makkan by him, S. 110 Madīnan, and S. 111 again Makkan.[54] Iṣlāḥī regards S. 110 as Makkan,[55] thus maintaining the solidity of the Makkan bloc.

Third, Iṣlāḥī thinks that each of the seven sūrah groups treats all the phases of the Islamic movement as led by Muḥammad in Arabia, though the emphasis in each group is different.[56] This idea, in this form, is not found in Farāhī.

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[49]Ibid., p. 74.

[50]Ibid., p. 91.

[51]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 1:xii-xiii.

[52]Ibid., 1:xiv.

[53]Ibid., 1:xii-xiii.

[54]Farāhī, *Dalā'il,* p. 93.

[55]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 8:628-630.

[56]Ibid., 1:xiv.

Summary

Of the several differences between the Farāhī-Iṣlāḥī principles and the traditionally held principles of Qur'ān exegesis, the most significant pertains to *naẓm*: while other scholars make no mention of *naẓm* as an exegetical principle, Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī not only regard it as one, they regard it as a principle of supreme importance. The constituents of *naẓm*, according to Farāhī, are three: order, proportion, and unity. Basically, Iṣlāḥī takes over Farāhī's *naẓm* framework, but makes a few changes in it. Both Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī believe that it is *naẓm* that, by providing a definite context for Qur'ānic verses, yields the correct interpretation of the Qur'ān.

Chapter III

THE SŪRAH AS A UNITY (1)

According to Iṣlāḥī, every Qur'ānic sūrah is a unity and ought to be studied and understood as such. Basically, however, this is an idea that Iṣlāḥī has borrowed from Farāhī. It is necessary, therefore, to first examine the latter's concept of the sūrah as a unity.

Existence of *Naẓm* in a Sūrah

Farāhī offers the following arguments to prove that all Qur'ānic sūrahs possess *naẓm* or thematic-structural coherence. First, the division of the Qur'ānic material into so many sūrahs indicates that each sūrah has a distinct theme, otherwise the whole of the Qur'ān could have been made one sūrah. Second, the unequal length of the sūrahs implies that it is considerations of *naẓm* that determined the length of any sūrah. Third, the word "sūrah" means "a wall enclosing a city." Within an enclosing wall there can be only one city. Within a sūrah, likewise, there can be only one set of integrally related themes. In the Qur'ān, even sūrahs that have similar themes but lack this integral connection are not combined into one sūrah, a fact borne out, for example, by the last two sūrahs.[1] Fourth, the Qur'ān, claiming to be inimitable because it was from God, challenged the disbelievers to produce the like of at least one of its sūrahs,[2] which suggests that by a "sūrah" it meant a thematically complete and structurally coherent discourse.[3] Finally, the larger sūrahs of the Qur'ān contain passages (e.g. 2:1-20) that have an obvious *naẓm*, and reflection on such passages will enable one to discover *naẓm* in those places in the Qur'ān in which it may not be

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[1]Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, p. 51.

[2]See chapter I, n. 2.

[3]Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, pp. 51-52; *Dalā'il*, p. 76, n. [2]. It is noteworthy that Farāhī's interpretation of the Qur'ānic challenge is different from the interpretation usually given. Since the shortest sūrah (no. 103) contains three verses, Muslim scholars have held that the disbelievers, if they agree to meet the challenge, should produce a composition at least three verses long (see, for example, Zarkashī, 2:108-110). But they do not stipulate that the composition also possess coherence. Farāhī, however, regards this as a necessary condition, the actual number of verses in the sūrah to be produced in response to the challenge being quite immaterial in his view. *Majmūʿah*, p. 52.

so obvious.[4] These arguments are not conclusive. The first, second, and fourth arguments do not by themselves prove that the Qur'ānic sūrahs possess *naẓm*, at least the kind of *naẓm* Farāhī has in mind. Any cogency the third argument may have will derive from taking the word "sūrah" exclusively in the sense in which Farāhī takes it, but there are other interpretations of the word.[5]

The last argument is certainly more empirical than speculative, but it needs to be supported by a greater amount of evidence before it can be accepted as valid. Once it is found to be valid, however, it will lend credence to some of the other arguments.

This brings us to the question: Has Farāhī provided sufficient evidence to prove his thesis? The answer hinges on the definition of "sufficient evidence." Farāhī's *Majmūʿah* contains commentary on no more than fourteen sūrahs: nos. 1, 51, 66, 75, 77, 80, 91, 95, 103, 105, 108, 109, 111, 112.[6] All of these are among the shorter sūrahs of the Qur'ān, some of them the shortest, and Farāhī's commentary on two of them (1 and 112) is incomplete. From a quantitative point of view like this, Farāhī would hardly seem to have supplied sufficient evidence.

But the phrase "sufficient evidence" may have another—methodical—sense. If it can be shown that Farāhī has developed a method that, upon being applied to all the sūrahs, will yield results supporting his view of the sūrah as a unity, then he may be said to have furnished sufficient evidence. Farāhī has indeed tried to develop such a method, to which we now turn.

Farāhī's Method and His Application of It

According to Farāhī, each Qur'ānic sūrah has a distinct controlling theme called *ʿamūd*. The *ʿamūd* (literally, "pillar, column") is the hub of a sūrah, and all the verses in that sūrah revolve around it. In attempting to establish the unity of a sūrah, Farāhī's central concern is to determine the sūrah's *ʿamūd*.[7] The present arrangement of the Qur'ānic verses (and sūrahs) is of course taken for granted by Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī. Farāhī seems to be using the following procedure to determine the *ʿamūd* of a typical sūrah.

A few readings of the sūrah help mark the points at which thematic breaks of some kind occur in it, thus yielding sections into which the sūrah is divided.[8] Each section is carefully studied until a main idea seems to emerge and unite the verses the section is composed of. Next an attempt is made to discover a master idea under which the main ideas of all the individual sections can be subsumed and which itself is developed logically in the sūrah as the sūrah proceeds from the first to the last verse. If this master idea appears to unite the entire sūrah into an organic whole and stands the test of repeated scrutiny, it is accepted as the proper *ʿamūd* of the sūrah, otherwise the search for the *ʿamūd* begins afresh.[9]

Farāhī's concept of *ʿamūd* may be illustrated with reference to his analysis of the 51st sūrah, *adh-Dhāriyāt* ("The Scattering Winds"). Farāhī divides the sūrah's sixty verses into seven sections: vss. 1-14, 15-19, 20-23, 24-37, 38-46, 47-51, and 52-60. The first section states the thesis that the phenomena of God's mercy and wrath in this world (in this case the phenomena of winds and rains,

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[4] Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, p. 52.

[5] See, for example, Zamakhsharī, 1:239-240; Nīsābūrī, 1:28-29. See also *Geschichte*, 1:31, n. 1; Hirschfeld, p. 2, n. 6; Rodinson, p. 131.

[6] Iṣlāḥī (*Majmūʿah*, p. 23) refers to a manuscript containing Farāhī's partial commentary on Ss. 2 and 3. As far as I know, the commentary is still unpublished.

[7] The concept of *ʿamūd* is a major concept in Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī, and so its nature should be understood clearly. Farāhī defines *ʿamūd* as "something that unifies the themes of a discourse" (*jimāʿ maṭālib al-khiṭāb*). The *ʿamūd* is "the main drift of a discourse" (*majrā al-kalām*), "the essential thesis" (*maḥṣūl*), and "the basic intent" (*maqṣūd*) in a sūrah. *Dalā'il*, p. 73. But an *ʿamūd* is not "something that induces unity in a general way" (*jāmiʿ ʿāmm*); it is, rather, "a specific and definite unifying principle" (*jāmiʿ amr khāṣṣ*). Ibid., p. 76, n. [1]. Also, the *ʿamūd* must be one of the "universals" (*al-umūr al-kulliyyah*), that is, themes or matters that are free from the limitations of time and space. Ibid., p. 62. The *ʿamūd* is the key to the understanding of a sūrah. Ibid., p.77. The *ʿamūd*, again, is what gives a sūrah its identity. Farāhī writes "... when the themes of a discourse interlock and are oriented toward the same *ʿamūd*, and the discourse becomes unified, then the discourse acquires a distinct identity." Ibid., p. 75. The *ʿamūd* would thus appear to have five characteristics. First, it has centrality: it is that theme of a sūrah to which all the other themes of the sūrah can be reduced, it itself being irreducible. Second, it has concreteness: it should be a concrete theme and not things like tone or mood. Third, it has distinctiveness: the *ʿamūd* of any one sūrah must be clearly distinguishable from the *ʿamūd* of any other. Fourth, it must be a universal, which implies that things like specific injunctions (*aḥkām*) cannot serve as *ʿamūd*, though they may be illustrative of the *ʿamūd*. See ibid., p. 62. Fifth, it has hermeneutic value: it provides the basic point of reference in a sūrah and all the themes and ideas in that sūrah must be explained with reference to it. In a word, the *ʿamūd* is a hermeneutically significant theme characterized by centrality, concreteness, distinctiveness, and universality.

[8] There may be sūrahs (like Ss. 103, 108, 111, 112) that are too small and "monolithic" to admit of sectional division.

[9] This account is based on an analysis of Farāhī's treatment of the sūrahs and on the following statements by him:

which are sometimes beneficial to man and sometimes harmful) point to the reward-and-punishment system in the hereafter. The section also explains the aspect of punishment in the afterlife, the next section explaining the aspect of reward. The third section reinforces the thesis by drawing arguments from the phenomena of nature and human existence. The next two sections provide historical evidence in support of the thesis. The sixth section relates the theme of the hereafter to two other fundamental themes in Islam: the oneness of God and prophecy. The last section consoles the Prophet, saying that the responsibility for his opponents' disbelief lies with the opponents themselves and not with him.[10]

The ʿ*amūd* of the sūrah, according to Farāhī, is the theme of recompense in the hereafter,[11] with emphasis on the aspect of retribution.[12] This ʿ*amūd*, as can be seen, runs through the whole of the sūrah, knitting all seven sections into a unity. It is also apparent that there is a logical progression of ideas in the sūrah: a thesis is stated (section 1), explained (sections 2, 3), reinforced with arguments of several types (sections 4, 5), placed in a larger perspective

1. "The ʿ*amūd* of a sūrah is of the nature of a logical definition: it cannot be correctly identified without making a repeated examination of the [sūrah's] *naẓm*, finding connections between sentences, and comprehending the [sūrah's] themes as a whole. If you then arrive at a likely ʿ*amūd*, one that is the most compatible with the *naẓm* [of the sūrah], gives the clearest exposition [of the sūrah's themes], and provides the best [explanation of the] arrangement of the sūrah, you have hit upon the right thing; otherwise you must search for some other ʿ*amūd*. *Dalā'il*, p. 73, n. 1.

2. "[In order to discover the ʿ*amūd* of a sūrah] one must very carefully scrutinize and repeatedly examine the sūrah's themes that resemble one another and occur side by side [in the sūrah] until the ʿ*amūd* shines forth like light at dawn. When this happens, the whole of the sūrah is illuminated, its *naẓm* becomes manifest, and the most likely of the several possible interpretations [of the sūrah] is reached." Ibid., p. 73.

3. "It is well known that much of the Qur'ān is characterized by an obvious *naẓm*. What is not well understood is the mode of relation [between Qur'ānic verses or passages] in places where the discourse takes a different turn. In such places, there exists a link, a connection, or what you may call 'the junctions of speech' (*maʿāṭif al-kalām*). It is these that should occupy the most serious attention of the seeker of *naẓm*. . . . Once you are assured of them, you will be assured of the *naẓm* of the sūrah." Ibid., p. 80.

[10]Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, pp. 93-145.

[11]Ibid., pp. 94, 95.

[12]Ibid., p. 95.

(section 6), and, finally, related to the situation in which it was being presented by Muḥammad (section 7). That the aspect of punishment rather than that of reward receives greater emphasis is evident from the way the illustrative material is presented in the sūrah,[13] and also from the sūrah's tone. This emphasis may account for the fact that, in the sūrah, it is the retribution, and not reward, that is spoken of after the initial statement of the overall theme of recompense.

The ʿ*amūd* is thus the bedrock of a sūrah's *naẓm*. It is the unifying thread of the sūrah, which can be understood as a unity only after its ʿ*amūd* has been discovered.

But while the discovery of the ʿ*amūd* is the basic prerequisite for establishing the unity of a Qur'ānic sūrah, many other things have to be kept in mind before one can fully appreciate a sūrah's *naẓm*. For one thing, one must determine whom the Qur'ān is principally addressing in a sūrah, otherwise one will fail to comprehend the sūrah's logic, mood, and scheme of argument.[14] Farāhī's interpretation of S. 105, *al-Fīl* ("The Elephant"), differs radically from the traditional interpretation,[15] and a major reason for that is that, in Farāhī's view, it is the Quraysh of Makkah, and not Muḥammad, whom the Qur'ān is addressing.[16] Also, the Qur'ānic method of presentation should be understood because of its significance from the viewpoint of a sūrah's *naẓm*. The Qur'ān draws parallels and contrasts between themes and situations in passages juxtaposed to each other (as in 51:1-14 and 15-19;[17] 77:1-40 and 41-44[18]). It combines arguments taken from history, nature, and human life to reinforce the same point (as in 51:1-46[19] and in the whole of S. 91[20]). Also, following the standard literary practice of its time, the Qur'ān usually omits what are known as the transitional words and expressions—a Qur'ānic stylistic feature that can be most exasperat-

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., pp. 62-63.

[15]Ibid., pp. 372-410.

[16]Ibid., pp. 369-372.

[17]Ibid., pp. 104-105.

[18]Ibid., p. 242.

[19]Ibid., pp. 120, 124-125.

[20]Ibid., p. 283.

ing to a modern reader, accustomed as he is to styles that make abundant use of such connecting links.[21] Farāhī also holds that if a sūrah has several or many sections, each section possesses internal *naẓm* (as, do, for example, 51:20-23,[22] 24-46,[23] 66:10-12,[24] 80:23-32[25]), which should be studied as part of the overall *naẓm* of the sūrah.

Farāhī successfully applies his method to those sūrahs in the *Majmūʿah*—twelve in number—on which he has written a complete commentary. As in the case of *adh-Dhāriyāt,* so in the case of each of the other eleven sūrahs he is able to offer a cogent account of the sūrah's unity. A reader of the *Majmūʿah* is very likely to conclude that, judging from Farāhī's treatment, the Qur'ānic sūrahs are characterized by unity. But here we should pause to note a significant fact about the *Majmūʿah.*

With one exception (that of S. 66), all the sūrahs Farāhī discusses in the *Majmūʿah* are Makkan.[26] Now there are certain obvious differences between the Makkan and the Madīnan sūrahs. Thematically, the Makkan sūrahs lack diversity. They usually deal with the fundamentals of Islamic doctrine, speak in terms of principles, and base the argument for Islam on a small number of themes (like those of the oneness of God, prophecy, and the hereafter). The Madīnan sūrahs, on the other hand, generally give details of practical conduct, and, as such, deal with a variety of social, political, economic, and other matters.

Structurally, many Makkan sūrahs are of a discrete, staccato nature. They present vivid scenes and dramatic dialogue, making rapid shifts from one subject to another—in the form of verses that are often short, incisive, and aimed at shaking up the audience. By contrast, the Madīnan sūrahs are, as a rule, expository and discursive, have complex and long-drawn-out sentences, frequently contain parenthetical material, and seem to have many loose ends. Of

[21] Farāhī, *Dalā'il,* pp. 65-67.

[22] Idem, *Majmūʿah,* p. 119.

[23] Ibid., pp. 137-138.

[24] Ibid., pp. 184 ff.

[25] Ibid., pp. 271-273.

[26] Iṣlāḥī regards S. 112, too, as Madīnan (*Tadabbur,* 8:643-644), thus differing with the traditional view (for which, see Zarkashī, 1:193). As for Farāhī, he does not raise the point at all, and so it is safe to assume that he regards it as Makkan.

course one cannot make a watertight distinction between the two types of sūrahs; each contains features found in the other. Still it is possible to make a fairly clear distinction between the two types, and what we have said about their divergent natures is basically valid.

This raises a question. If there are important differences between the Makkan and the Madīnan sūrahs, then these differences must have a bearing on the subject of a sūrah's unity. Can we say that Farāhī's theory, which we found to be applicable to the Makkan sūrahs he has discussed, will equally apply to the Madīnan sūrahs, which (with the one exception noted above) he has not discussed? Our search for an answer to this question brings us to Iṣlāḥī, for it is Iṣlāḥī who has tried to apply Farāhī's theory to all the sūrahs in the Qur'ān.

Iṣlāḥī's Treatment of the Subject

Before we discuss Iṣlāḥī's treatment of the Madīnan sūrahs, we shall inquire into how he treats the Makkan sūrahs that Farāhī has left undiscussed, and, for that matter, the ones the latter *has* discussed?

The Makkan Sūrahs

In writing his commentary on the sūrahs on which Farāhī's commentary exists, Iṣlāḥī usually borrows very heavily from his teacher, as is evident from his commentary on Ss. 51, 75, 95, 103, 105, 108, and 111.[27] Occasionally, he differs with Farāhī on a sūrah's *ʿamūd.* One example is S. 77, *al-Mursalāt* ("Those Sent Forth"). Farāhī describes its *ʿamūd* as: the Resurrection, fear of God, and good acts.[28] In Iṣlāḥī's view, the *ʿamūd* is: warning to the disbelievers that certain punishment awaits them in the hereafter.[29] The *ʿamūd,* as stated by Iṣlāḥī, has the advantage of being more precise, but it does not materially differ from the *ʿamūd* as Farāhī states it, for the three themes isolated by Farāhī are combined into one by Iṣlāḥī. Once or twice, however, the *ʿamūds* suggested by the two writers differ more sharply, as in the case of S. 80, *ʿAbasa* ("He

[27] Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 6:575-634 (S. 51), 8:71-96 (S. 75), 433-446 (S. 95), 529-540 (S. 103), 555-566 (S. 105), 589-598 (S. 108), 627-639 (S. 111).

[28] Farāhī, *Majmūʿah,* p. 223.

[29] Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 8:123.

Frowned"). According to Farāhī, the sūrah prohibits Muḥammad from wasting his attention on people who belittle the truth.[30] According to Iṣlāḥī, the *ʿamūd* is essentially the same as that of the preceding sūrah, *an-Nāziʿāt*[31] ("Those That Snatch Away"), namely, the certainty of the coming of the Last Day and the ease with which God can bring about that day.[32]. A look at the sūrah's content will show Iṣlāḥī's *ʿamūd* to be more accurate.

Again, Iṣlāḥī's sectional division of a sūrah sometimes differs from Farāhī's. To take one example, the latter divides S. 80 into the following sections: vss. 1-10, 11-22, 23-32, 33-42.[33] Iṣlāḥī's division is as follows: vss. 1-10, 11-16, 17-23, 24-32, 33-42.[34] The difference is obviously of no major significance. We may conclude that, as far as the sūrahs of the *Majmūʿah* are concerned, Iṣlāḥī is basically content to reproduce Farāhī's commentary.

To this general conclusion, however, there are two exceptions: Ss. 1 and 112. Since Farāhī's commentary on them is incomplete (also, in discussing them, Farāhī tends to be less "exegetical" and more "philosophical"), Iṣlāḥī had to write his own commentary on them. While the latter's commentary on each of the two sūrahs does justice to Farāhī's method and bears out its relevance and usefulness, it is his commentary on S. 1 that is remarkably treated from the standpoint of *naẓm*. In it, Iṣlāḥī not only convincingly brings out the sūrah's coherence, he also shows why the sūrah may rightly be called the Qur'ān in miniature and why it serves as an ideal preface to the Qur'ān.[35]

According to Iṣlāḥī's division of the Qur'ānic sūrahs into Makkan and Madīnan[36] (to be compared in chapter VI with the traditional division), the number of the Makkan sūrahs on which

[30]Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, p. 249.

[31]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, p. 191.

[32]Ibid., 8:169.

[33]Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, pp. 249, 262, 268, 274.

[34]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 8:191-192.

[35]Ibid., 1:12-28. Appendix A presents Iṣlāḥī's analysis of the sūrah.

[36]Ibid., 1:xii-xiii.

Iṣlāḥī has written original commentary comes to seventy-five.[37] This is a large number, and even a cursory look at Iṣlāḥī's commentary on these sūrahs will reveal that it is closely patterned on the model furnished by Farāhī in the *Majmūʿah*. Of course there is a major and immediately noticeable difference: Iṣlāḥī's commentary lacks the sweep of Farāhī's commentary. In dealing with his subject, Farāhī provides extensive etymological discussions, copious parallels from Arabic poetry, exhaustive comparisons with the Bible, and detailed comments on other scholars' interpretation of the Qur'ānic verses in question. Iṣlāḥī, while he uses this approach on a smaller scale, usually confines himself to a study of the Qur'ānic text proper, concentrating on the *naẓm* aspect of the Qur'ān. But this difference, though important, should not engage our attention for too long, our main interest being Iṣlāḥī's approach to Qur'ānic *naẓm*. And in point of Qur'ānic *naẓm*, we can safely remark that Iṣlāḥī, in trying to arrive at the *naẓm* of a Makkan sūrah, employs Farāhī's method as scrupulously as does Farāhī himself, and achieves results essentially similar to those Farāhī achieves in the *Majmūʿah*. As far as the Makkan sūrahs are concerned, one can say that Iṣlāḥī presents a strong case for Farāhī's theory.

The Madīnan Sūrahs

In writing his commentary on the aforementioned seventy-five Makkan sūrahs, Iṣlāḥī had before him not only Farāhī's theory, but also the model that the latter provides in the *Majmūʿah*. In dealing with the Madīnan sūrahs, Iṣlāḥī has practically no model before him. Farāhī's commentary on S. 66, which is Madīnan, could not have been of much help. The twelve verses of the sūrah bear reference to a single historical incident and do not raise any *naẓm* problems at all. Iṣlāḥī borrows much of Farāhī's commentary on the sūrah, although he states the sūrah's *ʿamūd* a little differently thar

[37]Although he wrote a complete commentary on a few sūrahs only, Farāhī did lea notes in which he talked about *naẓm* in the other sūrahs and about certain difficu points in them. See *Majmūʿah*, p. 23. Even so, one can see from *Dalā'il* and oth works of Farāhī that these notes are quite sketchy, and, from the point of view serving as a basis for writing a detailed commentary on the sūrahs, rather inadequa To a large extent, then, Iṣlāḥī's commentary on these sūrahs is original.

does Farāhī.[38] But, from the standpoint of *naẓm,* it is hardly a representative Madīnan sūrah, and, as we said, could not have served Iṣlāḥī as a model for writing commentary on all the Madīnan sūrahs. In a sense, therefore, it is the Madīnan sūrahs that present the strongest challenge to Iṣlāḥī, as also to Farāhī's theory. We have to [illegible] to what extent Iṣlāḥī is able to offer a reasoned explanation of *naẓm* in these sūrahs, and to what extent Farāhī's theory helps him perform that task.

In order to see how Iṣlāḥī deals with the Madīnan sūrahs, we shall select S. 4, *an-Nisā'* ("Women"), as our main point of reference. *An-Nisā'* is one of the longest sūrahs, in fact the second longest,[39] and well represents the thematic and structural complexity of the Madīnan sūrahs.[40] We will first give a summary of Iṣlāḥī's analysis of the sūrah's contents, and then offer our observations. The next chapter will further elucidate Iṣlāḥī's approach to Qur'ānic *naẓm* by comparing it, with reference to S. 4, with the approaches of two modern commentators who believe in the unity of the Qur'ānic sūrah.

Summary of an-Nisā'[41]

Iṣlāḥī divides the sūrah into three parts, and each part into a number of sections. The sections are once again divided into subsections in the Urdu translation Iṣlāḥī gives, but we can ignore these sub-sections here. Verse numbers are given in parentheses.

1. *Social Reform (1-43)*: All human beings are united through God, their Creator, and through Adam and Eve, their common ancestors (1). God-consciousness (*taqwā*) and kinship thus provide a basis for the regulation of human affairs. An appeal to this basis underlies the following: the instruction to the guardians of orphans to treat the latter with kindness and shun avarice in managing the latter's property (2-10); the statement of the law of inheritance (11-14); the placing of checks on sexual anarchy (15-18); the prescription of rules for safeguarding women's rights (19-22); and the description of women one may or may not marry (23-25). The importance of these injunctions is driven home (29-33), and their scope is enlarged (34-35). A final note on the rights of God and human beings (36-43) rounds off this part.

2. *The Islamic Community and Its Opponents (44-126)*: Analysis of Jewish opposition to the reforms, and prophecy of the establishment, in the face of all opposition, of an Islamic State (44-57). Unlike Jews, Muslims must never let national and sectarian conflicts keep them from truth and justice; the means by which Muslims can achieve unity, and the need for them to beware of the Hypocrites, who may subvert this unity (58-70). Unlike the Hypocrites, who are skeptical about the fate of Islam, are reluctant to make any sacrifices for Islam, and shrink from fighting for Islam, Muslims must be prepared to serve their religion and fight for it when necessary (71-76). The weaknesses and machinations of the Hypocrites (77-85). Recommended attitude the Muslims should adopt toward the Hypocrites at this stage (86-100). The manner of performing ritual prayer during war (101-104). There is no need to make undue allowances for the mischief-making Hypocrites (105-115), who will face the wrath of God (116-126).

3. *Conclusion (127-176)*: Reply to a few questions about vss. 2-4 of the sūrah (127-134). Muslims must keep their responsibilities in mind and beware of the Hypocrites, who are admonished (135-152). Warning to the People of the Book (153-162). Consolation to Muḥammad: he should not worry over the disbelief of the opponents. The opponents given a final warning (163-175). Supplement to vs. 12 (176).

The *ᶜamūd* of the sūrah is described by Iṣlāḥī as: factors that make for cohesion in a Muslim society.[42]

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[38]According to Farāhī, the *ᶜamūd* is: the principle that an individual is himself responsible for failing to fulfill his moral obligations, and that only sincere repentance will make amends for such lapses. *Majmūᶜah,* p. 163. Iṣlāḥī states the *ᶜamūd*—probably more accurately—as: how to observe, in a relationship of love with others, the *ḥudūd* ("bounds, prescriptions") of God. *Tadabbur,* 7:451.

[39]Sayyid Quṭb, 1:554

[40]Why did we not choose S. 2 or 3, obvious candidates for such a study? First, because Farāhī's partial commentary on them exists (see n. [illegible] above), and we do not know to what extent Iṣlāḥī is indebted to him for his commentary on them. Second, both sūrahs have lengthy sections containing theological discussions, and these sections do not present any serious *naẓm* problems.

[41]Following his usual practice, Iṣlāḥī provides an introductory analytical summary of S. 4 (for which, see *Tadabbur,* 2:11-16). However, it is in his *naẓm* discussions, which occur within the commentary at points of sectional division, that Iṣlāḥī attempts to explain how the various sections of a sūrah are interconnected. And since in this chapter we intend to highlight Iṣlāḥī's view of a sūrah's *naẓm,* the summary of *an-Nisā'* that we have presented here is to a large extent based on these *naẓm* discussions by Iṣlāḥī.

[42]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 2:9-10.

Observations

1. Even this summary is likely to give one the impression that Iṣlāḥī has made a creditable attempt at presenting *an-Nisā'* as an integrated whole. The division of the sūrah into three main parts seems to be justified by the major thematic shifts that occur in the sūrah at vss. 44 and 127, although it may be asked whether vs. 135 does not make as good a point of division as vs. 127. The three parts are convincingly shown to be interlinked in a progressively unfolding scheme of thought. The first part deals with some of the social reforms that Islam introduced in Arabia. The second part evaluates the hostile response these reforms evoked from the Madīnan opponents of Islam–Jews and Hypocrites–and also deals with certain organizational matters pertaining to the Muslim community. The third part answers a few questions that arose about some of the earlier verses of *an-Nisā'*, warns the opponents of Islam, and consoles Muḥammad.

Not only are the three parts interlinked, each part itself is informed by *naẓm*. The first part describes the reforms that Islam introduced in Arabia. As can be seen from the summary of the sūrah, all these reforms embody and illustrate the principle stated in the opening verse, namely, that God-consciousness and kinship constitute, or ought to constitute, the basis for the unity of mankind. Iṣlāḥī also shows that the various types of reforms as mentioned in this part are sequentially linked, discussion of one type of reform leading to the discussion of another, until the part is summed up in the verses that bring it to an end. The themes of the second part may appear to be disparate, but Iṣlāḥī explains the connection between them as follows. The reforms, as we have said, triggered the opposition of certain elements in Madīnah. It is against this background of opposition that the second part dwells on the theme of Muslim solidarity and warns the Muslims against the subversive element within their ranks–that of the Hypocrites. As for the prophecy of the establishment of an Islamic State, it is pertinent here because the establishment of such a State is a logical result of the consolidation of a Muslim community or society.[43] The third part has an unmistakable ring of being a conclusion. Instead of raising new issues, it rounds off the discussion that has already taken place in the first two parts by replying to certain questions,

[43] Ibid., 2:9, 76.

giving final warnings, and consoling Muḥammad. A study of each of the three parts of the sūrah from the viewpoint of *naẓm*, therefore, strengthens one's impression that Iṣlāḥī has offered a sound *naẓm* interpretation of the sūrah.

And this impression is further reinforced when one looks at Iṣlāḥī's division of the sūrah into twenty-three sections (ten in the first part, eight in the second, and five in the third). Each section is obviously dominated by one main idea, which serves to distinguish it from the section preceding or succeeding it. At the same time, the sections appear to exist in a logical order: each section bears a connection to the preceding and following sections. We shall presently try to determine with greater precision the nature of the connection that Iṣlāḥī establishes between these sections, for that has an important bearing on Iṣlāḥī's method of establishing *naẓm* in a sūrah, especially in a Madīnan sūrah. But one can hardly disagree with Iṣlāḥī when he describes the sūrah's *ʿamūd* as the "foundations of Muslim social solidarity." For that is the theme that runs through the three parts and the twenty-three sections and to which all the verses make explicit or implicit reference.

Farāhī's concept of *ʿamūd* will thus seem to be relevant, and his method of discovering a sūrah's *ʿamūd* applicable, in the case of *an-Nisā'*. And so will many of the other devices Farāhī uses to establish *naẓm* in a sūrah. Like Farāhī, Iṣlāḥī looks for parallels (e.g. between avarice and licentiousness [vss. 2-4, 15-18[44]], both being disruptive of social order);[45] draws contrasts (e.g. between the Jews' abandonment of the *Sharīʿah* and the obligation of Muslims to adhere to it [vss. 58-70]),[46] and between the Hypocrites' unwillingness to take part in a war and the Muslims' duty to be prepared to fight when called upon to do so [vss. 71-76]);[47] and notes the inter-

[44] The verses referred to in this paragraph are those of S. 4.

[45] Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 2:34.

[46] Ibid., 2:90.

[47] Ibid., 2:103-104. See also ibid., 2:109-111, for Iṣlāḥī's comment on vss. 77-85.

nal *naẓm* of individual sections[48] or of certain verses.[49] Also, use of such techniques and search for thematic rather than verbal links for the purpose of establishing *naẓm* enables Iṣlāḥī to see unity of composition in many places in the Qur'ān where a modern scholar might suspect incoherence or disjointedness. In using this approach, Iṣlāḥī is following the lead of Farāhī.

2. But this does not mean that Iṣlāḥī does no more than mechanically apply Farāhī's theory to the sūrahs on which Farāhī's commentary does not exist. For one thing, application of a theory like Farāhī's calls for a creative endeavor. The procedure that Farāhī lays down for discovering a sūrah's *ᶜamūd* is a complex one. It is analytic in one respect and synthetic in another: it involves the breaking down of a sūrah into its constituent parts in order later to knit those parts into a unity—without at any moment compromising the received order of verses in the sūrah. The discovering of the *ᶜamūd* of each new sūrah is like taking new territory, for even though the basic strategy of determining the *ᶜamūd* be the same, each sūrah presents at least some problems of its own, and the strategy has to be adjusted to suit the peculiar aspects of each sūrah.

But a close look at Iṣlāḥī's treatment of *an-Nisā'* will reveal that he has also developed a new technique that helps explain the *naẓm* of Qur'ānic sūrahs, especially Madīnan sūrahs. A digression is here necessary in order to explain this technique adequately.

We have already observed that, as a rule, the Madīnan sūrahs possess greater thematic diversity than do the Makkan sūrahs, and that, structurally, the former are discursive and the latter discrete. We can now address ourselves to the question: Do these differences between the Makkan and Madīnan sūrahs have any bearing on the question of a sūrah's *naẓm*?

The answer would seem to be in the affirmative. It is easy to see why fewer themes should mean fewer *naẓm* problems. And a little reflection will show why fewer *naẓm* problems are raised by a discrete structure, which characterizes many Makkan sūrahs. In a discretely structured text, the units of thought presented have a

[48]See, for example, Iṣlāḥī's comments on vss. 86-100. Ibid., 2:121-123.

[49]See, for example, vs. 163, which, Iṣlāḥī remarks, contains two lists of prophets, one constructed on the chronological principle (Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, and Jacob) and the other made up of pairs of prophets, each of the two prophets in a pair having undergone suffering of a similar type or received divine succor of like nature (Jesus and Job, Jonah and Aaron, Solomon and David, and Moses and Muḥammad). Ibid., 2:203.

sharper outline, the formal contours of one idea are relatively easily distinguishable from those of another, and the major *naẓm* problem one faces is that of integrating these thought-units into a whole. In other words, one's attention is concentrated on the synthetic rather than the analytic process, though the latter does not thereby lose its importance. The synthetic process in the case of such a text is facilitated by the fact that relational categories like those of comparison and contrast (categories that form an essential element of Farāhī's method) are easier to apply, and the *naẓm*, to that extent, less problematic to discover. An example of discrete structure would be two passages, juxtaposed to each other, one describing good and the other evil. The existence of a relationship of contrast between the two passages will be readily noticed, and that would explain the *naẓm* of the passages. It is also clear that this relationship of contrast, once perceived to exist between the two passages, will aid one in establishing that relationship between similar passages occurring anywherever. This, then, is the nature of a large number of Makkan sūrahs: a few themes occur in them with great frequency and with a fairly regular degree of structural discreteness, thus making it comparatively easy for one to identify *naẓm* in many places in those sūrahs. Perhaps an example from Makkan sūrahs will elucidate the point.

A persistent theme of the Makkan sūrahs is that of the warning of the two-fold punishment (destruction in this world and damnation in the next) that the Qur'ān administered to the disbelieving Quraysh of Makkah. The Quraysh insisted on being shown a "sign" or "proof" (*āyah*) of the threatened punishment. To this demand the Qur'ān often replies thus: Muḥammad has been sent to present a message that should be judged on its own merits; he is not supposed to show miracles, with which, in fact, if one is genuinely seeking the truth, the universe and human history are replete. A few sets of passages in Makkan sūrahs that discuss this theme are given below (the size of the passage in each case is the one given by Iṣlāḥī in *Tadabbur*, to which the notes refer the reader for detailed *naẓm* explanations):

6:33-39, 40-50, 51-55, 56-67.[50]
10:11-12, 13-14.[51]

[50]Ibid., 2:388-389, 414-415, 431-432, 434, 438-439, 443-444.

[51]Ibid., 3:263-264, 277.

11:12-16, 17-24.[52]
15:1-15, 16-25.[53]
17:58-60, 61-65.[54]
21:30-33, 34-43, 44-47.[55]
25:45-60, 61-77.[56]
26:1-9, 10-68.[57]
54:1-8, 9-42.[58]
98:1-3, 4-5, 6-8.[59]

A study of these sets of passages in the Qur'ān will show that: a) the passages in each set contain constituents of the aforesaid theme (the theme of the two-fold punishment), though not all the constituents of the theme may be present in each passage in a set; b) the thought-units in almost all passages of a given set are presented discretely, which is to say that a clear break in thought is discernable between the two passages—or any two passages if there are more than two—of a set; c) and some sets of passages (e.g. the last one on the list) are easier of comprehension from a *naẓm* viewpoint than others (e.g. the first one). The similarity of thematic constituents, the discrete structure, and the varying degrees of comprehensibility (from the viewpoint of *naẓm*) combine to drive home the point made above, namely, that comprehension of *naẓm* aspects in certain passages of a Makkan sūrah will aid one in comprehending *naẓm* aspects in like passages in other Makkan sūrahs.

This does not mean, to repeat, that the Madīnan sūrahs are altogether devoid of the features of the Makkan sūrahs or vice versa. We have already seen, with reference to *an-Nisā'*, that Madīnan sūrahs are quite amenable to Farāhī's method, something that would not have been possible had the two types of sūrahs been completely different. The Madīnan sūrahs, however, do pose a certain *naẓm* problem that is not posed, at least not in a pronounced

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[52]Ibid., 3:348, 362 ff.

[53]Ibid., 3:589-590, 592-596, 598-600.

[54]Ibid., 3:715-716, 757, 758-761, 763-765.

[55]Ibid., 4:254-255, 277, 278-282, 285ff.

[56]Ibid., 4:572, 603, 606 ff., 615.

[57]Ibid., 4:627-628, 630-633.

[58]Ibid., 7:87-88, 90-95, 96-101, 104 ff.

[59]Ibid., 8:474-475, 479-485.

form, by the Makkan. The many themes of a typical Madīnan sūrah would sometimes appear to fade or melt into one another, thus blurring the distinction between the thought-units. One of the ways in which Iṣlāḥī seems to be able to establish *naẓm* connections in such places is by applying what, for want of a better expression, may be called the technique of isolating the germ idea.

The assumption underlying the technique is that a particular section in a sūrah, dominated as it is by a main idea, may contain another idea in germ form. The germ idea, while perfectly integrated into the main idea of the section, grows to become, or serves as the basis of, the main idea of the next section. A few examples will make this clear. (Again, the section-size in each case is the one established by Iṣlāḥī.)

In *an-Nisā'*, the section consisting of vss. 2-10 has as its main idea the responsibilities that a guardian must discharge toward the orphans under his care. But the section also contains (in vs. 7) the germ idea of the Islamic law of inheritance, which becomes the main idea of the next section (vss. 11-14).[60] In the section consisting of vss. 19-22, the dominant idea is that of meting out fair and just treatment to women. But present in the section is the germ idea that the pre-Islamic practice of marrying one's widowed step-mother is a loathsome practice. This idea then paves the way for a description, in the next section (vss. 23-25), of women one may or may not marry.[61] Likewise, the principal idea of another section in the sūrah (vss. 105-115) is that Muslims must not make undue allowances for the Hypocrites and have no soft spot for them in their hearts. The section also has the germ idea that the Hypocrites will end up in hell. The next section (vss. 116-126) explains why the Hypocrites will meet this fate.[62]

A few examples from other Madīnan sūrahs may be given. In S. 2, *al-Baqarah* ("The Cow"), vss. 215-221 reply to a few questions about the *ḥajj*, war, and the spending of wealth in the way of God. At the end of the section is introduced the idea that Muslim men are allowed to marry the mothers of orphans in their charge if that

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[60]Ibid., 2:28.

[61]Ibid., 2:44.

[62]Ibid., 2:155-156.

would ensure the welfare of the orphans.[63] This idea becomes the basis for a discussion of the theme of marriage and divorce in the next two sections (vss. 222-231, 232-237;[64] incidentally, the two sections could have been combined to make one section). In S. 3, *āl ᶜImrān* ("The Family of ᶜImrān"), the section composed of vss. 64-71 invites the People of the Book to accept Islam. Vs. 69 in this section introduces the germ idea that a particular group from among the People of the Book is trying to mislead Muslims. The next section (vss. 72-76) takes up this idea and gives details of it.[65] In S. 8, *al-Anfāl* ("Spoils"), the opening section (vss. 1-8) points out some of the marks of true Muslims. It also refers to God's promise to help the Muslims on the occasion of the Battle of Badr. The next section (9-19) explains how God helped them.[66]

Iṣlāḥī's successful application of this technique in many places in Madīnan sūrahs not only solves *naẓm* problems in those places, it also highlights a characteristic feature of Madīnan sūrahs.

3. A few problems in regard to Iṣlāḥī's approach need to be addressed. The first has to do with the exact nature of *naẓm* in Madīnan sūrahs. As before, our main point of reference will be S. 4.

In chapter II we noted that, according to Farāhī, a discourse possesses true *naẓm* when it is characterized by order (*ḥasan at-tartīb*), proportion (*ḥasan at-tanāsub*), and unity (*qawī al-waḥdāniyyah*).[67] It is this kind of *naẓm* or *niẓām* that Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī seek to disover in the Qur'ānic sūrahs. For the moment, we are concerned with Iṣlāḥī's treatment of *an-Nisā'*, and it would seem that his interpretation of *an-Nisā'* either does not sufficiently bring out the second of the three elements of *naẓm* in the sūrah—proportion—or fails to offer an adequate explanation for its apparent lack of it.

Proportion implies symmetry or balance. Insofar as a building is asymmetrical, or a discourse digressive, it will lack balance. Yet a reading of *an-Nisā'* is bound to leave one with the impression that

[63]The word *nisā'* in S. 4, vss. 3 and 4, is interpreted by Iṣlāḥī as "the mothers of orphans," and not as "women" in general, as is usually done by Muslim commentators. See *Tadabbur*, 2:24-26. See also ibid., 1:475-477, where Iṣlāḥī observes that Qur'ān 2:221 has a similar context and is comparable to Qur'ān 4:2-6.

[64]Ibid., 1:477, 496.

[65]Ibid., 1:711-712, 719.

[66]Ibid., 3:30.

[67]Farāhī, *Dalā'il*, p. 77.

the sūrah contains a few digressions. Iṣlāḥī does show that a single *ᶜamūd* pervades the sūrah and that the various parts and sections of the sūrah are well-connected. But connection and digression are not mutually exclusive. A discourse may smoothly depart from the main to a side issue and with equal smoothness return to the main issue, and yet, despite its apparent continuity, the discourse will have become digressive.

To take an example from S. 4, the Hypocrites are first alluded to in the sūrah in vs. 60, are explicitly mentioned in vs. 61, and are then made the subject of a lengthy discussion. One feels that a subject that was tangentially introduced has perhaps assumed inordinately large proportions. Would Iṣlāḥī regard this as a digression or not?

To be sure, Iṣlāḥī is conscious of the fact that the Qur'ānic method of presentation might evoke the comment that the Qur'ān is digressive. Referring to the question of the Hypocrites and the other opponents in *an-Nisā'*, he offers the following explanation:

> It should be remembered that the Qur'ān is not simply a collection of legal injunctions, but is also a book that invites people to Islam (*daᶜvat kā ṣaḥīfah*). Accordingly, it had to take into account the reaction it provoked at the time it laid down those injunctions. Side by side with such injunctions, therefore, the Qur'ān everywhere deals with the conditions created directly or indirectly by its opponents. Also, from the point of view of spreading the [Islamic] message, it is imperative that these conditions be taken into account. But people who are unaware of this feature of the Qur'ān wonder why, together with these legal injunctions [in *an-Nisā'*], the Hypocrites and the opponents have been discussed at such great length.[68]

That is to say, the unity of a sūrah is to be conceived of not merely in terms of presentation of themes *in abstracto,* but in terms of the practical, dynamic context in which the sūrah was revealed.

Is this a concealed admission on Iṣlāḥī's part that the Qur'ān does in fact depart from what one would normally call a compact treatment of a subject? Iṣlāḥī would probably reply with an emphatic "No," saying that he has offered, as far as the Qur'ān is concerned, a restatement of the notion of "compact treatment of a subject." And here is the rub. If it is a restatement, it does not go far enough. It is certainly necessary that a reader of the Qur'ān not lose sight of the dynamic context in which a particular sūrah was

[68]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 2:16.

revealed, and to that extent Iṣlāḥī's insight is a valuable one. But appeal to context would at best seem to be a partial explanation of a phenomenon that one encounters so frequently in the Qur'ān, especially in Madīnan sūrahs. Sometimes in Madīnan sūrahs there occurs a series of digressions, as, for example, in the first fifty verses of S. 5, *al-Mā'idah* ("The Repast")[69] Here again Iṣlāḥī makes a creditable attempt at explaining *naẓm* connections between the verses, and points out that the notion of covenant runs through not only these but the rest of the verses of the sūrah as well. But the impression of the Qur'ān's having made a number of digressions stays with the reader and one wonders whether the context of *al-Mā'idah* could warrant so many of them and yet the sūrah, possessed as it may be of some kind of thematic unity, could be credited with *tanāsub* or proportion. Can some other explantion of the phenomenon be found?

An explanation might be found in the literary tradition of pre-Islamic Arabia. This tradition was basically poetic-oral in character. Now the demands, strictures, and expectations that a poet has to meet in such a tradition are significantly different from those a poet has to meet in a tradition based on the written word. In his *Singer of Tales,* Albert Lord compares the techniques of oral and written poetry and finds them to be "contradictory and mutually exclusive."[70] Speaking of oral poetry, he remarks that "at a number of points in any [unlettered] song there are forces leading in several directions, any one of which the singer may take."[71] Again, writing about the themes of oral poetry, he observes:

> Although the themes lead naturally from one to another to form a song which exists as a whole in the singer's mind with Aristotelian beginning, middle, and end, the units within this whole, the themes, have a semi-independent life of their own. The theme in

[69]These verses speak of dietary law (1-5); *ṣalāh* and the importance of reposing faith in God (6-11); the covenants that the People of the Book made with God (12-14) and the need for the People of the Book to accept the Islamic message (15-19); two historical events–Israel's 40-year wandering in the desert (20-26) and Cain's murder of Abel (27-31); capital punishment in Mosaic Law, and the punishment for breaking the Law of God (32-34); the need for Muslims to adhere to the *Sharīᶜah*, and the punishment for stealing (35-40); the machinations of Jews and Hypocrites; the Evangel as the book Christians had been instructed to base their decisions on, and the Qur'ān as the final criterion for interpreting earlier scriptures (41-50). See ibid., 2:217-219, 224 ff., 238-239, 244-245, 250, 256, 264-265, 272-273, 280, 287-288.

[70]Lord, p. 129.

[71]Ibid., p. 120.

> oral poetry exists at one and the same time in and for itself and for the whole song.[72]

It is easy for an oral poet to digress: ". . . in the adding of one element in a theme to another, the singer [i.e. poet] can stop and fondly dwell upon any single item without losing a sense of the whole."[73]

It is not being suggested that all of Lord's premises and conclusions are readily applicable to the Qur'ān. But the basic point he makes in the quotations given above is worth noting. Lord is saying that the oral tradition has about it a certain flexibility or elasticity that allows the poet to manipulate his material in a freer manner than is possible for a poet working in a written tradition. This is true of the pre-Islamic Arabic poetic tradition. In the *qaṣā'id* ("odes") composed during the Jāhilī period, one frequently comes across long passages that do not give an impression of discontinuity having taken place in the poem and yet constitute a digression from the subject in hand. Al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥillizah al-Yashkurī, despairing of winning his beloved, tries to divert himself with the thought of his swift and reliable she-camel, and the thought gives him occasion to dwell on the qualities of the camel in the next several verses.[74] A classic example is afforded by the poet ᶜAmr ibn al-ᶜAbd, known as Ṭarafah, who, in his *muᶜallaqah,* introduces his she-camel and then composes about thirty verses to describe her.[75]

It is true that the Qur'ān cannot be likened to pre-Islamic poetry: there are too many differences between the two. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the Qur'ān was revealed in the context of an oral tradition, and that, in order to make sense in that tradition, it had to assume certain features characteristic of that tradition. The feature of digression, I believe, is one such feature. The oral medium, by its very nature, is a "relaxed" medium, not a rigorous one, and, in the context of this medium, the concept of proportion is automatically redefined, since things like digression are sanctioned by the medium itself and not regarded as abnormalities. Perhaps we can even reconcile the dynamic context of the

[72]Ibid., p. 94.

[73]Ibid., p. 92.

[74]Vss. 9-14 in his *muᶜallaqah* ("suspended ode"). See Tibrīzī, pp. 434-438. For an English translation, see Arberry, p. 222.

[75]Vss. 11-40 in his *muᶜallaqah.* Tibrīzī, pp. 141-162; Arberry, pp. 83-85.

Qur'ān (to which Iṣlāḥī appeals) with the pre-Islamic Arabic literary tradition by saying that, while the latter explains *why* digression takes place in the Qur'ān at all, the former explains *what kind* of digression is called for in the specific context of a given sūrah.

4. Some of the *naẓm* explanations Iṣlāḥī offers are questionable. He says that vss. 127-130, with which the third part in his analysis of *an-Nisā'* begins, occupy the particular position they do because they were revealed at a later time in reply to a question about vss. 2-4 of the sūrah.[76] Likewise, he remarks about vs. 176 that it forms a supplement to the sūrah because it was revealed at a later time in response to a question about vss. 11-12 of the sūrah.[77] Iṣlāḥī's view of the positioning of such explanatory verses can be called in question on two counts.

First, vss. 127-130 and vs. 176 open with the same formula:

> And people ask you for an injunction regarding women. Say: God lays down for you the following injunction . . . (vss. 127-130).

> And people ask you for an injunction regarding the *kalālah* [a deceased person with no ascendants or descendants alive]. Say: God lays down for you the following injunction . . . (vs. 176).

One may ask why, despite the obvious similarity in their formulaic structure, vss. 127-130 and vs. 176 were not grouped together, as in done elsewhere in the Qur'ān. In 2:215-219, for example, the formula "they question you . . ." is used four times, each time to reproduce a question Muḥammad was asked about a certain Qur'ānic injunction. According to Iṣlāḥī, the four questions pertained to four different sets of Qur'ānic verses.[78] Yet the questions, with their formulaic identity, were grouped together. Iṣlāḥī does not explain why vss. 127-130 and vs. 176 of S. 4 should not likewise have been grouped together, or, conversely, why the four questions in 2:215-219 were bracketed together. The point is that Iṣlāḥī makes it sound as if, structurally, vss. 127-130 and vs. 176 in S. 4 *must* have remained separate because they referred to two different questions. But, as is shown by 2:215-219, the Qur'ān does not follow a strict rule about the positioning of such explanatory verses. Incidentally, the third part of Iṣlāḥī's division begins at vs. 127, but it is equally

[76]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 2:165.

[77]Ibid., 2:210-211.

[78]Ibid., 1:465-474.

possible for it to begin at vs. 135, where the break in the thought is equally sharp.

Also, it is not necessary that a verse that is revealed at a later time in response to a question about another verse be detached from the earlier verse to which it makes reference–another impression one gets from Iṣlāḥī's comment on vss. 127 and vs. 176 of S. 4. Iṣlāḥī himself remarks about vs. 4 of S. 5 that it was revealed in answer to a question about vs. 3 of the same sūrah,[79] and yet the verses were placed next to each other.

These are perhaps minor points. But, taken together with the point made about digression, they do warn against conceiving of a sūrah's unity in a rigid and inflexible sense.

5. A fundamental objection to the concept of ^{c}*amūd* is that opinions about the ^{c}*amūd* of a sūrah can differ. Two scholars, studying the same sūrah, may arrive at two different, even conflicting, ^{c}*amūds,* and, as a result, offer divergent interpretations of the sūrah. We have already noticed that Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī themselves have offered different accounts of the ^{c}*amūds* of a few sūrahs (nos. 66, 77, and 80). The inescapble conclusion seems to be that the use of even identical methodology by two or more scholars will not guarantee identical results. At best what can be said is that, of the several or many ^{c}*amūds* that may be suggested of a sūrah, the one that best explains the sūrah and satisfactorily answers most of the questions about it will be the proper ^{c}*amūd.* But even this ^{c}*amūd* must always remain open to further scrutiny. Thus an element of tentativeness will inhere in any given ^{c}*amūd.* Once again we see that an ironclad view of *naẓm* would hardly be tenable.

6. This, however, in no way takes away from the value of the concept of ^{c}*amūd.* We have already seen, with reference to Iṣlāḥī's analysis of S. 4, that a properly identified ^{c}*amūd* will induce coherence in a sūrah that otherwise may appear to be an aggregate of unrelated verses. Appendix B will show how some of the Qur'ānic verses and passages, which are usually regarded by scholars as isolated and disconnected, become, by virtue of the ^{c}*amūd,* meaningfully integrated into the contexts in which they occur. In fact, the ^{c}*amūd* does not merely provide a point of convergence for a sūrah's themes or verses, it often becomes an important determinant of interpretation. Appendix B will also illustrate how the ^{c}*amūd* may make for a different, and more cogent, Qur'ānic interpretation than

[79]Ibid., 2:232.

the one traditionally accepted. It will, in other words, provide support for the contention of Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī that *naẓm* is exegetically significant.

7. A reader of the Qur'ān will be struck by the fact that the Qur'ān, instead of exhaustively treating one theme in one place before taking up another, keeps coming back to its themes in various sūrahs, and he may get the impression that the Qur'ān is repetitive. The Qur'ān views the matter differently. It uses the terms *taṣrīf al-āyāt,* which signifies not "repetition of verses," but "presentation of verses (or signs) from various angles."[80] The concept of *ᶜamūd* also throws light on this feature of *taṣrīf.* A study, in the light of the *ᶜamūds* of the relevant sūrahs, of any major Qur'ānic theme will suggest that, in any given sūrah, only those aspects of the theme are discussed that are apposite to the sūrah's *ᶜamūd.* Let us take an example.

Among the sūrahs that narrate aspects of Abraham's life and message are Ss. 6, 21, 51, and 60. The *ᶜamūd* of S. 6 is: Islam as the religion of Abraham. The sūrah presents Islam before the Makkan pagans, saying that Muḥammad is preaching the same religion that Abraham stood for, and that, as a result, they should have no hesitation in accepting Islam.[81] Vss. 74-83 of the sūrah relate an incident in which Abraham rejects the sun, the moon, and stars as objects worthy of worship. Since the sūrah invites the Makkans to embrace Islam, the incident, through its appeal to logic and history, is meant to facilitate the Makkans' conversion to Islam.[82]

The *ᶜamūd* of S. 21 is: impending punishment for the disbelieving Makkans.[83] Contrary to S. 6, S. 21 uses a threatening tone, and all the historical evidence it adduces in support of its thesis has a decisive ring about it. Vss. 51-70 show Abraham breaking the images made by his unbelieving people. The incident is not only consistent with the sūrah's *ᶜamūd,* it also has the sūrah's tone.[84]

The *ᶜamūd* of S. 51, as we noted earlier in the chapter, is: reward for the virtuous and punishment for the wicked in the hereafter.[85] In vss. 24-34, Abraham is visited by angels, who have been commissioned to give him the good news of the birth of a son, and, at the same time, to wreak destruction upon the people of Lot. Reward for Abraham and punishment for the people of Lot serve [illegible] pointers to the reward-and-punishment system that will operate in the next life. There is thus a direct connection between the incident and the sūrah's *ᶜamūd.*[86]

Among the Muslims who had emigrated to Madīnah, there were some who still maintained social ties with their pagan relatives and friends in Makkah. The *ᶜamūd* of S. 60 is: the need for these Muslims to make a complete break with the hostile Makkans.[87] Vss. 4-6 of the sūrah say that these Muslims ought to take Abraham as their model, for Abraham and his followers made a complete break with their people when the latter turned hostile to them.[88]

8. It is notable that, in offering his interpretation of S. 4, Iṣlāḥī is able to dispense with the occasions of revelation as an exegetical aid. He can be said to have provided support for the view, held by him and Farāhī, that the occasions of revelation can, and should, be derived from the Qur'ān itself.

But this is not to say that Iṣlāḥī regards all historical background to the Qur'ān as irrelevant. The socio-historical ambience in which the Qur'ān was revealed is not only accepted by Iṣlāḥī, it is also frequently referred to by him in expounding the Qur'ān. For example, in interpreting S. 30 (which refers to the Perso-Byzantine War[89]), 33 (which refers to Muḥammad's marriage to Zaynab, the divorcée of Zayd[90]), and 59 (which refers to the exile from Madīnah of the Jewish tribe of Banū n-Naḍīr[91]), Iṣlāḥī supplies all the necessary historical details. But such details constitute information that is verifiable through independent historical inquiry, and Iṣlāḥī freely uses such information to amplify Qur'ānic references wherever necessary. What Iṣlāḥī would regard as largely dispensable is the infor-

[80]The expression *taṣrīf ar-riyāḥ* (2:164; 45:5) means "to [illegible] winds to blow in different directions."

[81]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 2:385, 387.

[illegible]See ibid., 2:460-461, 466 ff.

[83]See ibid., 4:253.

[84]See ibid., 4:296 ff.

[85]Ibid., 6:575.

[86]See ibid., 6:603, 606 ff.

[87]Ibid., 7:319.

[88]See ibid., 7:328.

[89]Ibid., 5:67, 72 ff.

[90]Ibid., 5:177-179, 191 [illegible].

[91]Ibid., 7:279-280, 283 ff.

mation found in works like *Asbāb an-Nuzūl* by Abū l-Ḥasan ᶜAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076), and a book of the same title by Suyūṭī.[92] Wāḥidī and Suyūṭī list, under isolated verses, *aḥādīth* purporting to relate incidents that "occasioned" the revelation of the verses in question. That certain incidents may have caused the revelation of certain verses is quite understandable. But there are some problems with what actually passes under the name of *asbāb an-nuzūl*, especially when these *asbāb an-nuzūl* are regarded as absolutely indispensable to Qur'ān exegesis.[93] For example, *asbāb an-nuzūl* for all the verses of the Qur'ān are not available, and those that are available are of varying degress of authenticity and not infrequently conflict with one another. Quite often, the *asbāb an-nuzūl* would make a sūrah look like a completely disjointed discourse even when an obvious unity or coherence informs the sūrah. It is probably for reasons like these that Iṣlāḥī, like Farāhī, does not attach much significance to the *asbāb an-nuzūl*. But the most important reason why he does not do so is that, like Farāhī, he regards the Qur'ān as essentially self-explanatory. *Tadabbur* is eloquent testimony to the large measure of success Iṣlāḥī has achieved in presenting a cogent interpretation of the Qur'ān without having recourse to the *asbāb an-nuzūl*.

Summary

The concept of the unity of the sūrah, as understood by Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī, means that each sūrah is a thematically complete discourse that has been presented in a coherent structural framework. The received verse-arrangement in any sūrah is accepted without any alterations, and is in fact considered indispensable to a sūrah's *naẓm*.

Besides propounding the concept of the unity of the sūrah, Farāhī laid down a method for arriving at that unity. Using that method, he wrote a complete commentary only on a few sūrahs. It was Iṣlāḥī who successfully applied Farāhī's method to all the sūrahs of the Qur'ān. In so doing, he developed a technique of his own that is especially useful in bringing out *naẓm* aspects of Madīnan sūrahs.

The notion of ᶜ*amūd* imparts an organic dimension to the

[92] For Suyūṭī's comparison of his book with Wāḥidī's, see Suyūṭī, *Asbāb,* 1:7-8.

[93] See Wāḥidī, pp. 3-4; and Suyūṭī, *Asbāb,* 1:5.

Farāhī-Iṣlāḥī concept of the sūrah as a unity. In this respect Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī differ from those scholars who conceive of a sūrah's *naẓm* in terms of a simple linear connection (see chapter I).

The unity of the sūrah should not be construed in a very rigid sense. The Qur'ān, revealed as it was in a basically oral medium, did not cease to have the flexibility intrinsic to that medium. The sūrah is probably not as rigorously unified as Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī would seem to believe.

If the Qur'ānic sūrah is taken as an organic whole, then the need to rely upon the *asbāb an-nuzūl* is drastically reduced, for the use of *asbāb an-nuzūl* as an exegetical aid is largely predicated upon taking a verse-by-verse approach to the verses of a sūrah.

Chapter IV

THE SŪRAH AS A UNITY (2)

In chapter I we saw that a number of modern Muslim scholars regard the Qur'ān as a book endowed with coherence. Two of the 20th-century Qur'ān exegetes who have made significant attempts to present the sūrahs as unities are: Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn aṭ-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1312-1402/1903-1981) of Iran and Sayyid Quṭb (1324-1386/1906-1966) of Egypt. In this chapter we shall compare Iṣlāḥī's concept of the unity of the sūrah[1] with theirs.

Naẓm Views of Ṭabāṭabā'i and Sayyid Quṭb

We shall begin by reproducing the ideas of Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Sayyid Quṭb on *naẓm.*

Ṭabāṭabā'ī

As the speech of God, Ṭabāṭabā'ī writes in *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān,* the Qur'ān must possess unity (*waḥdah*). The unity of a discourse derives, according to him, from "the unity of its meaning," and it is this "unified meaning" that the Qur'ān chiefly aims to put across. He then defines this unified meaning as the guiding (*hidāyah*) of mankind to the right path.[2]

Next he points out that the division of the Qur'ān into a large number of sūrahs signifies that each sūrah has "a kind of unity of composition and a wholeness that is to be found neither in the [separate] parts of a sūrah nor in two sūrahs taken together." He continues:

> From this we conclude that the sūrahs have divergent aims, that each sūrah is intended to convey a specific meaning, to serve a

[1]Although the concept of the sūrah, as understood by Iṣlāḥī, originated with Farāhī, we shall here refer to it as Iṣlāḥī's, and that for two reasons. First, by creatively applying it to a very large number of Qur'ānic sūrahs, Iṣlāḥī has in a [illegible] "acquired" the concept. Second, throughout this chapter a major basis of comparison of Iṣlāḥī with Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Sayyid Quṭb will be the commentaries written by the three [illegible] S. 4, *an-Nisā',* [illegible] which Farāhī's commentary does not exist.

[2]Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1:16.

> specific purpose (*gharaḍ*), on the achievement of which alone will the sūrah achieve its fulfillment.[3]

Thus, before presenting his interpretation of a sūrah, Ṭabāṭabā'ī usually provides a brief account of the sūrah's *gharaḍ.* As a rule, he divides a sūrah into a number of sections and tries to establish links between them. The *gharaḍ* of S. 4 is stated by him as follows:

> The *gharaḍ* of the sūrah is to describe the rules governing matrimonial life—like the number of wives [one is allowed to marry], women one may not marry—and the rules of inheritance. Also discussed in it are some other rules, like those pertaining to ritual prayer, war, the [bearing of] several kinds of testimony, trade, etc. The People of the Book are also discussed.[4]

Ṭabāṭabā'ī considers the *gharaḍ* of a sūrah important enough to reject on its basis an interpretation of a verse if, in his view, the interpretation does not agree with the sūrah's *gharaḍ*.[5] He stresses the point that the Qur'ān is self-explanatory,[6] and, generally, does not rely on the occasions of revelation in giving his basic interpretation of Qur'ānic verses, these occasions being "applications" (*taṭbīqāt* or *ḥukm taṭbīqī*) of the verses already revealed and not "actual causes" (*asbāb ḥaqīqiyyah*) of the revelation of particular verses.[7] Often, however, he cites them in separate sections of his commentary after having presented his basic interpretation.

Sayyid Quṭb

Sayyid Quṭb firmly believes that each Qur'ānic sūrah is a unity, and he repeats the idea a number of times in *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān.* The following is a typical passage:

> From this it will become obvious to one who lives in the shade of the Qur'ān that each of its [Qur'ān's] sūrahs has a distinct personality. It is a personality that possesses a soul. In the company of the soul lives a heart, as if it were living in the company of the soul

[3]Ibid. This is reminiscent of one of the arguments Farāhī advances for the existence of *naẓm* in the Qur'ānic sūrahs. See chapter III.

[4]Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 4:134.

[5]See, for example, ibid., 4:135-136.

[6]Ibid., 1:6, 8-9.

[7]See, for example, ibid., 4:287, 379. Cf. Zarkashī, 1:31-32.

of a living being possessed of distinct traits and characteristics. And it [sūrah] has one or several principal themes which are tied to a specific central thesis (*miḥwar*, "pivot, axis"). And it has an atmosphere of its own, an atmosphere that affects all its themes, making the sūrah's context approach these themes from specific angles. The result is a harmony induced between the sūrah's themes in accordance with the sūrah's atmosphere. And it [sūrah] has a musical rhythm or beat, which, if it changes during the course [of the sūrah], changes in deference to certain specific thematic considerations. This is the general impress or character of all the Qur'ānic sūrahs.[8]

As an example, we will see how Sayyid Quṭb describes S. 4 as having a distinct identity. He writes:

> This sūrah represents part of the effort that Islam made to establish a Muslim community and build a Muslim society, and to protect that community and preserve that society. It offers an example of the Qur'ān's involvement with the new society.[9]

And:

> The sūrah tries to eradicate the features of Jāhilī society–from whose midst the Muslim group was picked up–and get rid of its residual elements; to fashion a Muslim society and purify it of the vestiges of Jāhiliyyah; and to bring into relief its special identity–at the same time that it strives to mobilize [Muslims] to protect the distinctive character of their society.[10]

But these quotations would describe, according to Sayyid Quṭb, not only the *miḥwar* of S. 4, but, in a broad sense, the *hadaf* ("objective") of the entire Qur'ān as well. In his commentary on S. 5 Sayyid Quṭb states this general objective of the Qur'ān in these words:

> From this it will become clear that, like the three long sūrahs [nos. 2, 3, 4] that precede it, this sūrah deals with various themes, the link between them being the worthy *hadaf* for the attainment of which the whole Qur'ān was revealed, namely: to raise a community, to establish a State, and to organize a society on the basis of a special creed, a definite outlook, and a new structure. . . .[11]

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[8] Sayyid Quṭb, 1:27-28. For more examples, see ibid., 1:555; 2:833.

[9] Ibid., 1:555.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 2:825.

Typically, Sayyid Quṭb would divide a sūrah into several or many sections and try to see thematic links between them. He does not regard the *asbāb an-nuzūl* as a major exegetical source; in fact he does not hesitate to criticize them if they happen to contradict the results of his own study of the Qur'ān.[12]

Comparison with Iṣlāḥī

At first sight, the three exegetes–Iṣlāḥī, Ṭabāṭabā'ī, and Sayyid Quṭb–appear to have a great deal in common. All of them look at a sūrah as a whole and try to determine its *ᶜamūd* (Iṣlāḥī), *miḥwar* (Sayyid Quṭb) or *gharaḍ* (Ṭabāṭabā'ī). Whenever possible, they analyze a sūrah into a number of sections and explain how they are interconnected. Again, all of them rely chiefly on the Qur'ānic text for interpreting the Qur'ān, considering the occasions of revelation to be theoretically dispensable as an exegetical aid. But, in fact, the differences between the three writers are no less striking than the similarities. The differences that set Iṣlāḥī apart from the other two are especially notable, and are discussed below.

Thematic Precision

Iṣlāḥī's description of the central themes of the sūrahs is more precise than Ṭabāṭabā'ī's or Sayyid Quṭb's. By a more precise description is meant not one that uses fewer words to express the themes of the sūrah, but one that brings out the essential thesis of a sūrah with greater completeness, accuracy, and distinctiveness. To take the example of S. 4,[13] Ṭabāṭabā'ī's statement of the sūrah's *gharaḍ* is obviously sketchy and inadequate. Sayyid Quṭb's *miḥwar* of the sūrah is more comprehensive, but, as is clear from the quotation about Sayyid Quṭb's view of the *hadaf* of the whole of the Qur'ān, the particular *miḥwar* of S. 4 is hardly distinguishable from the general *hadaf* of the Qur'ān. In Iṣlāḥī, on the other hand, the *ᶜamūd* of S. 4 aptly sums up the basic theme of the sūrah and is also sūrah-specific.

As another example, we will take S. 18, *al-Kahf* ("The Cave"). The bulk of the sūrah deals with five stories: the Sleepers in the Cave (vss. 9-26); two gardens (vss. 32-49); Adam and Satan (50:59);

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[12] See, for example, ibid., 2:832.

[13] The summary of the sūrah given in chapter III may be used for purposes of reference.

Moses' journey (60-82); and Dhū l-Qarnayn (83-101). According to Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the *gharaḍ* of the sūrah is

> to tell the three unusual stories that are found nowhere else in the Qur'ān—the stories of the Sleepers in the Cave, Moses' journey with a young man to the spot where two seas meet, and Dhū l-Qarnayn—and to derive from them the conclusions that the discourse in the sūrah tries to draw, namely, the negation of any partners [to God] and the admonition to man to develop fear of God, may He be glorified.[14]

Sayyid Quṭb describes the *miḥwar* of the sūrah as follows:

> As for the thematic *miḥwar* of the sūrah by means of which all its themes become interconnected and around which its [sūrah's] context is built, it is this: rectification of doctrine, rectification of outlook and thought, and rectification of values with reference to that doctrine.[15]

According to Iṣlāḥī, the *ᶜamūd* of the sūrah is two-fold: warning to the Quraysh that affluence should not make them arrogantly deny the truth, and instruction to the Muslims to persevere in the face of the Quraysh's opposition to them and wait for deliverance.[16]

A close study of the sūrah will probably lead one to the conclusion that the sūrah's contents are best explained with reference to Iṣlāḥī's *ᶜamūd* rather than to Ṭabāṭabā'ī's *gharaḍ* or Sayyid Quṭb's *miḥwar*. The five stories, taken together, illustrate the central theme as stated by Iṣlāḥī. The story of the Sleepers in the Cave tells of God's deliverance of a group of believers from the hands of their haughty oppressors. The parable of the two gardens tells of the fate of people whom material affluence makes forget the source of that affluence—God. The story of Adam and Satan compares the Quraysh's defiance of God to Satan's defiance of God and warns the Quraysh of the consequences. The story of Moses brings out the virtue of patience and resignation to the wise will of God. The story of Dhū l-Qarnayn tells of the right attitude that material prosperity should create in man: humility and not pride.

The five stories leave out three verse-passages in the sūrah: 1-8, 27-31, and 102-110. These passages state and reinforce the *ᶜamūd* as described by Iṣlāḥī, and Iṣlāḥī's *ᶜamūd* would thus seem to

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[14]Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 13:236.

[15]Sayyid Quṭb, 4:2257.

[16]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 4:9.

inform the whole of the sūrah and unite all the verses into an integrated whole. This cannot be said of Sayyid Quṭb's *miḥwar*, much less of Ṭabāṭabā'ī's *gharaḍ* : the latter is (as is frequently the case in Ṭabāṭabā'ī's commentary) sketchy, while the former is a little too undifferentiated and falls short of bringing out the essence of this particular sūrah.

This brings us to a consideration of the method each of these writers uses to determine the central theme of a sūrah. Ṭabāṭabā'ī's usual method of arriving at the *gharaḍ* consists in examining the sūrah's beginning, end, and "the general course" (*as-siyāq al-jārī*).[17] Sometimes he contents himself with looking at "the generality of the verses" (*ᶜāmmat al-āyāt*) in a sūrah.[18] In either case, it is difficult to determine the *gharaḍ* of a sūrah with great precision. This probably explains why Ṭabāṭabā'ī is sometimes led to say that a given sūrah does not have a single identifiable *gharaḍ*,[19] despite the statement (noted above) he makes to the contrary. At least once in his commentary, in discussing the *gharaḍ* of S. 9, he doubts the importance of discovering the *gharaḍ*: "In any case, from the exegetical point of view, no great advantage would accrue from this discussion [about the sūrah's *gharaḍ*]."[20]

Compared with Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Sayyid Quṭb has a much clearer perception of the central idea of a sūrah. But with Sayyid Quṭb we face problems of a different kind. For one thing, he does not always make a distinction between the *miḥwar* of a particular sūrah and the *hadaf* of the Qur'ān as a whole. For another, he seems to hold that the distinctiveness of a sūrah's character may derive sometimes from the sūrah's content but sometimes also from the sūrah's atmosphere, mood, and rhythmic and musical qualities. For example, he says about S. 54 that "the thematic contents of the sūrah" are the same as found in a number of Makkan sūrahs,[21] and then adds:

> But these very themes have been set forth in this sūrah in a special way, which transforms it into something completely new. They are presented with tempestuous fury, in a manner that slays and tears

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[17]See, for example, Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 16:98. For more examples, see ibid., 10:134; 16:208.

[18]See, for example, ibid., 5:157. See also ibid., 12:204.

[19]See, for example, ibid., 1:43.

[20]Ibid., 9:146.

[21]Sayyid Quṭb, [illegible]:3424

> apart, the sūrah arousing dread, surrounding itself with terror, spelling ruin. . . .[22]

But Sayyid Quṭb's description of the "distinctive character" of a number of other sūrahs (e.g. Ss. 50,[23] 51,[24] 53,[25] 56,[26] and 69[27]) is couched in similar, even identical terms. The problem is that things like mood and atmosphere would hardly seem to constitute a sure basis for distinguishing those sūrahs from one another that have a similar mood and atmosphere, since the expressions one can use to describe such features are bound to be vague and nebulous. This fact is nowhere more evident in *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān* than in the general Introduction Sayyid Quṭb provides to Ss. 78-114, which form the 30th and last *juz'* ("part"; pl. *ajzā'*) in the traditional division of the Qur'ān (a division that Sayyid Quṭb adheres to, but is criticized by Farāhī,[28] and completely disregarded by Iṣlāḥī in his *Tadabbur*). Most of these sūrahs are Makkan and appear to have common themes. Sayyid Quṭb attempts to draw distinctions among them on the basis of mood and atmosphere, images and rhythm, etc., found in them, but obscurity rather than clarity is the result,[29] and the introductions he later provides to the individual sūrahs of this group do not greatly help the situation.

As against Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Sayyid Quṭb, Iṣlāḥī offers pithy, sharply delineated *^{c}amūds* of the sūrahs. His attempt in the case of each sūrah is to arrive at an *^{c}amūd* that would sum up the sūrah and, at the same time, mark the sūrah off from the others. It is in a cognitively apprehended theme or idea that he looks for a sūrah's *^{c}amūd*. That is, he tries to distinguish one sūrah from another on a conceptual basis, and accepts a theme or idea as *^{c}amūd* only after it

[22]Ibid., 6:3425.

[23]Ibid., 6:3356-3357.

[24]Ibid., 6:3391.

[25]Ibid., 3404.

[26]Ibid., 6:3461-3462.

[27]Ibid., 6:3674-3675.

[28]On the ground that it causes an unnatural division of the sūrahs. See Farāhī, *Majmū^{c}ah*, p. 61.

[29]Sayyid Quṭb, 6:3800-3802.

has effectively knit the sūrah's verses into a coherent whole in the context peculiar to the sūrah.

It is true that Iṣlāḥī often attributes the same *^{c}amūd* to more than one sūrah. But the *^{c}amūds* he suggests of such sūrahs do not thereby become less distinct from each other, for in such cases he invariably provides some kind of concrete detail that clearly sets one sūrah apart from the others. For example, he will indicate the particular aspect of an *^{c}amūd* that a sūrah takes up to the exclusion of other aspects, which may be discussed in other sūrahs.[30] Or he will point out that a sūrah, while it shares its *^{c}amūd* with others, becomes distinct from them by virtue of the line of argument it takes to present the same *^{c}amūd*.[31]

Structural Integration

We shall now compare Iṣlāḥī's view of the sectional division of a sūrah and the linear connection between a sūrah's verses with Ṭabāṭabā'ī's and Sayyid Quṭb's view of the same. Again we shall take S. 4 as our point of reference.

Iṣlāḥī divides the sūrah into twenty-three sections, Ṭabāṭabā'ī into thirty-one, and Sayyid Quṭb into sixteen. At several points, Iṣlāḥī's sectional division coincides with Ṭabāṭabā'ī's (vss. 1, 11-14, 19-22, 71-76, 101-104) or Sayyid Quṭb's (vss. 36-43, 44-57, 58-70); all three writers put vs. 176 in a section by itself. But there are a few significant differences between the approach of Iṣlāḥī and the approaches of the other two writers. We shall first compare Iṣlāḥī with Ṭabāṭabā'ī.

From his analysis of S. 4 (and other sūrahs) one gets the impression that Ṭabāṭabā'ī would create a new section at the slightest variation that seems to occur in the theme of a sūrah. In his breakdown of S. 4, vss. 31, 43, and 135 each make up a separate section,[32] whereas in Iṣlāḥī's breakdown they are parts (and, in my view, well-integrated parts) of larger sections.[33] Iṣlāḥī's attempt seems to be to include in a section as many verses as would be held together by a common idea and to create a new section only when

[30]See, for example, Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 7:11 (S. 52) and 7:45 (S. 53), and 7:429 (S. 65) and 7:451 (S. 66).

[31]See, for example, ibid., 4:9 (S. 18) and 4:85 (S. 19), 4:571 (S. 25) and 4:627 (S. 26), and 4:705 (S. 27) and 4:775 (S. 28).

[32]Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 4:323 (S. 4), 359 (S. 31); 5:108 (S. 43).

[33]Iṣlāḥī, 2:59-60 (S. 4), 74-76 (S. 31), 178-179 (S. 43).

the break in ideas is a definite one. To illustrate the difference between Iṣlāḥī and Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the former includes vss. 15-18 of S. 4 in one section, while the latter divides them into two (vss. 15-16, 17-18). The verses deal with the theme of fornication, lay down (the initial) punishment for the crime, and state that the persons guilty of it should be allowed to go free if they repent. Ṭabāṭabā'ī's decision to make a separate section of vss. 17-18 was probably governed by the fact that it is these two verses, rather than vss. 15-16, that describe what sincere *tawbah* ("repentance") is. Iṣlāḥī combined the four verses into one section presumably because the word *tawbah* has already occurred in vs. 16, and also because the particle *innamā* ("but then, yet, however") in vs. 17 imparts to the two sets of vss. (15-16 and 17-18) an immediacy of connection that is best preserved by making one section of all the four verses. The same difference in approach is evident from the two writers' treatment of vss. 135-152, which form one section in Iṣlāḥī[34] but four in Ṭabāṭabā'ī.[35]

But this does not mean that Ṭabāṭabā'ī would always divide a set of verses into more sections than would Iṣlāḥī. The reverse is sometimes true. For example, vss. 105-126 of S. 4 are one section in Ṭabāṭabā'ī but two in Iṣlāḥī. Vs. 115 describes the punishment for opposing the Prophet. Both Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Iṣlāḥī agree that vs. 116 gives reasons for this punishment.[36] To Ṭabāṭabā'ī, this connection between vs. 115 and vs. 116 calls for the inclusion of vs. 116 (together with the next ten verses) in the same section that vs. 115 is in. Iṣlāḥī, however, groups vss. 116-126 into a different section. It is difficult to say whether it is more appropriate to make one or two sections of the verses, but the two sections of Iṣlāḥī have at least one merit: they take into account the grammatical change of person that takes place from the one to the other section. Vss. 105-115 primarily address the Prophet, whereas vss. 116-126 chiefly talk about his opponents. Thus one consideration that would seem to govern Iṣlāḥī's, but perhaps not Ṭabāṭabā'ī's, sectional division is that of a significant change of person, tone, and mood in the sūrah.

While Ṭabāṭabā'ī divides a sūrah into too many sections, Sayyid Quṭb divides it into too few. In general, Sayyid Quṭb is perhaps the least rigorous of the three writers when it comes to making a sectional division of a sūrah. The most striking evidence of this is

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[34]Ibid., 2:173, 178 ff.

[35]Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 5:108 ff.

[36]Ibid., 5:83. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 2:155-156, 159.

afforded by the fact that he lets the traditional *juz'*-division of the Qur'ān influence his sectional division. The division of the Qur'ān into thirty *ajzā'* is a quantitative one and is meant to enable a reader to complete one recitation of the Qur'ān in a month. It is not designed to accomodate thematic breaks in the Qur'ānic text, unless coincidentally. At eleven points in *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān*[37] (twice in S. 4, at vss. 23 and 147) Sayyid Quṭb's sectional division of the sūrahs has to suit the *juz'* of the Qur'ān, irrespective of whether that division is or is not justified on its own grounds. Neither Ṭabāṭabā'ī nor Iṣlāḥī pays any consideration to the *juz'* while analyzing a sūrah.

In regard to making a sectional division of a sūrah, therefore, Iṣlāḥī's approach would seem to be more methodical, and his sections more coherent and compact, than Ṭabāṭabā'ī's or Sayyid Quṭb's.

Iṣlāḥī also succeeds better in maintaining a linear connection between the verses and sections of a sūrah.

Ṭabāṭabā'ī, while usually concerned with interconnecting the verses of a sūrah, would not claim that all the verses of a sūrah form an uninterrupted chain. "Most of [its] verses," he writes of S. 4, "are not unconnected."[38] Here he not only concedes that some of the verses in the sūrah may lack connection with one another, he also speaks in unsure terms (". . . not unconnected"), which, in fact, frequently characterizes his utterances about linear connection in a sūrah.[39] Again, sometimes he is content with establishing a tenuous connection–"a semblance of connection," to use his own words[40]–between verse-passages; sometimes he rejects the idea that a connection between certain verses or sections can be established;[41] and sometimes he simply makes no attempt to establish a connection.[42] Sayyid Quṭb takes pains to interconnect verses and passages in a sūrah. But his chief endeavor seems to be to relate all the verses in a sūrah to the sūrah's main theme, and, in the process, he some-

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[37]*Ajzā'* 2-11, 13.

[38]Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 4:134.

[39]See, for example, ibid., 4:323, 387.

[40]Ibid., 4:316.

[41]See, for example, ibid., 4:360.

[42]See, for example, ibid., 4:[illegible]; 5:39,45, 108, 111, 124. One may conclude that, to him, an unbroken linear connection between a sūrah's verses is not essential to a sūrah's unity.

times neglects to establish a linear connection between verses and passages. For example, he remarks about the section composed of vss. 105-113 of S. 4 that it illustrates the Qur'ān's attempt to purify the Muslim community of residual pagan attitudes, such purification being a main concern of S. 4.[43] But he does not explain how this section is connected with the one that precedes it and why it occupies the position it does in the sūrah. The same observation can be made about his treatment of at least two other sections (vss. 135-147,[44] 148-170[45]) and many individual verses in S. 4.

To Iṣlāḥī, a clear and unbroken linear connection between a sūrah's verses and sections is integral to the sūrah's unity, and he makes a sustained attempt to establish such a connection. The verses of a sūrah thus not only come to bear a relationship to its central theme, they also represent, through the unbroken chain they make up, the logical development of that theme. Linear structure, in other words, enters into the thematic structure of a sūrah, and, in the final analysis, the two become indivisible.

Summary

A comparison of Iṣlāḥī's view of the sūrah as a unity with the similar views of Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Sayyid Quṭb shows that the sūrah acquires greater thematic precision and a better structural integration in Iṣlāḥī than it does in the other two exegetes.

[43] Sayyid Quṭb, 2:751-752.

[44] Ibid., 2:773-775.

[45] Ibid., 2:795-797.

Chapter V

THE SŪRAH PAIRS

The concept of the pairing of the sūrahs is original to Iṣlāḥī. According to Iṣlāḥī, the Qur'ānic sūrahs in their present arrangement are, as a rule, paired. That is, just as, on one level, each sūrah is an integrated whole and is distinct from all others, so, on another level, all sūrahs exist in the form of pairs, each pair composed of two closely matched sūrahs and distinct from the other pairs. In itself a self-contained unit, a sūrah, as a member of a pair, becomes complete only when it is taken in conjunction with the other member of the pair.

As a proof of the existence of the pattern of paired sūrahs in the Qur'ān, Iṣlāḥī points out that a number of sūrahs look like twins, e.g. Ss. 2 and 3, and 113 and 114. He also points out that Muḥammad used to recite in ritual prayer certain sūrahs as pairs, e.g. Ss. 61 and 62, 75 and 76, and 87 and 88, another indication of the pairing of the sūrahs.[1] That certain sūrahs appear to be forming obvious pairs will not escape the notice of even a casual reader of the Qur'ān. That Muḥammad often recited, in prayer, certain sūrahs in pairs is also well known.[2] But Iṣlāḥī has developed the notion of paired sūrahs into an elaborate concept and given it an extended application, which results in some interesting insights into the composition of the Qur'ān. The concept forms an integral part of Iṣlāḥī's *naẓm* theory, and, as such, is regarded by him as essential to the understanding of the Qur'ān. In fact, Iṣlāḥī holds, on the basis of 15:87 and 39:23 that the principle of sūrah pairing is sanctioned by the Qur'ān itself, a question that we will take up in the next chapter. In this chapter a description of Iṣlāḥī's concept of sūrah pairing is followed by a critical assessment of his contribution.

Sūrah Pairs: Synoptic Analysis

The vast majority of the sūrahs—82 out of 114—are unambiguously described by Iṣlāḥī as constituting pairs. He seems to imply

[1] Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 1:xiv.

[2] See, for example, Muslim, "Kitāb al-Jumu^{c}ah, Bāb Mā Yuqra'u fī Yawm al-Jumu^{c}ah"; Nasā'ī, "Kitāb Iftitāḥ aṣ-Ṣalāh, Bāb al-Qirā'ah fī ẓ-Ẓuhr"; Dārimī, "Kitāb aṣ-Ṣalāh, Bāb Qadr al-Qirā'ah fī ẓ-Ẓuhr."

that another 16 sūrahs also fall into this category. Three sūrahs are described as "supplementary," in the sense that they explain certain important themes presented only briefly in the immediately preceding sūrahs. Allowing for the exceptional position of S. 1, this leaves twelve sūrahs unaccounted for. The specifics for each of these categories are as follows:

1. The following sūrahs are specified by Iṣlāḥī as constituting pairs: 2-3; 6-7; 10-11; 12-13; 16-17; 18-19; 20-21; 22-23; 25-26; 27-28; 29-30; 31-32; 34-35; 36-37; 38-39; 42-43; 44-45; 50-51; 52-53; 61-62; 67-68; 69-70; 71-72; 73-74; 75-76; 77-78; 79-80; 81-82; 85-86; 87-88; 89-90; 91-92; 93-94; 95-96; 97-98; 101-102; 103-104; 105-106; 107-108; 109-110; 113-114.[3]

2. Although Iṣlāḥī does not specify them as paired, his description of the following sūrahs suggests that he considers them to be linked in the following way: 4-5; 8-9; 14-15; 40-41; 58-59; 65-66; 99-100; 111-112.[4]

3. S. 24 is supplementary to S. 23,[5] and S. 49 to S. 48.[6] S. 33 is supplementary to an entire sūrah group.[7]

4. S. 1, *al-Fātiḥah* ("The Opening"), is prefatory to the Qur'ān (and also to sūrah group I, of which it is a part). As such, it does not need another sūrah to form a pair with.[8]

This leaves Ss. 46, 47, 48, 54, 55, 56, 57, 60, 63, 64, 83, and 84 unaccounted for. Iṣlāḥī's treatment of these sūrahs raises certain problems which we shall discuss later.

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[3]The numbers outside the parentheses refer to sūrahs, those inside to volume and page(s) in *Tadabbur* : 2-3 (1:611-616); 6-7 (2:591); 10-11 (3:347); 12-13 (3:509); 16-17 (3:713); 18-19 (4:85); 20-21 (4:253); 22-23 (4:431); 25-26 (4:627); 27-28 (4:775); 29-30 (5:67); 31-32 (5:149); 34-35 (5:345); 36-37 (5:447); 38-39 (5:553); 42-43 (6:199); 44-45 (6:297); 50-51 (6:575); 52-53 (7:45); 61-62 (7:349); 67-68 (7:505); 69-70 (7:559); 71-72 (7:609); 73-74 (8:17, 37); 75-76 (8:99); 77-78 (8:151); 79-80 (8:191); 81-82 (8:235); 85-86 (8:297); 87-88 (8:325); 89-90 (8:365); 91-92 (8:397); 93-94 (8:409, 423); 95-96 (8:449); 97-98 (8:473); 101-102 (8:519); 103-104 (8:543); 105-106 (8:569); 107-108 (8:579); 109-110 (8:615); 113-114 (8:671).

[4]Ibid., 4-5 (2:9-10, 215-216); 8-9 (3:113); 14-15 (3:589); 40-41 (6:71); 58-59 (7:279); 65-66 (7:429-430, 451); 99-100 (8:489, 497); 111-112 (8:644).

[5]Ibid., 1:xiv; 4:491.

[6]Ibid., 1:xiv; 6:479.

[7]Ibid., 5:177.

[8]Ibid., 1:xiv. See also ibid., 1:26-27.

Complementarity

Underlying Iṣlāḥī's concept of sūrah pairs is the notion of complementarity: two sūrahs form a pair because they complement each other in significant ways. Iṣlāḥī generally describes the member sūrahs of a pair as having essentially the same *ᶜamūd* and contents, though the two sūrahs differ significantly in their treatment of the *ᶜamūd* and contents. The difference, and hence the complementarity, between the two sūrahs is thus found in the sūrahs' treatment of their subject matter rather than in the subject matter itself.

Iṣlāḥī distinguishes several different forms of complementarity, the principal ones being the following:

1. *Brevity and Detail.* Two sūrahs may complement each other when one of them states a theme briefly and the other treats it at length. For example, while S. 16 presents briefly the message of Islam before the Makkan pagans and before the Jews, warning them against rejecting it, S. 17 elaborates the message and gives a detailed warning. Furthermore, S. 17 expounds the set of commandments that are only briefly referred to in S. 16. Finally, S. 16 only alludes to the impending emigration of the Muslims to Madīnah, while S. 17 talks about it explicitly and instructs the Muslims to prepare themselves for it. Another example is the relationship between S. 73, which informs Muḥammad that God will soon lay "a heavy responsibility"[9] upon his shoulders, and S. 74, which explains the nature of that responsibility and instructs Muḥammad how to discharge it.[10]

2. *Principle and Illustration.* In some instances one sūrah in a pair illustrates the law or principle stated in the other sūrah in general terms. Thus S. 58 sets down the law that, in the end, victory belongs to God and His prophets and that the opponents of God and His prophets are destined for defeat, while S. 59 illustrates this law by referring to certain recent events.[11] Similarly, S. 95 states the principle that man, if he neglects to develop his potential goodness, will become corrupt and unworthy of himself, while S. 96 illustrates the principle with reference to the conduct of the Quraysh.[12]

3. *Different Types of Evidence.* Sometimes two sūrahs complement each other by using different types of evidence to support the

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[9]*qawlan thaqīlan*, which literally means "a weighty word."

[10]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 8:37.

[11]Ibid., 7:279.

[12]Ibid., 8:433, 449.

same thesis. Ss. 12 and 13 both state that good ultimately triumphs over evil. But while S. 12 substantiates this thesis with historical evidence (the story of Joseph), S. 13 appeals to reason and phenomena of nature to make the same point.[13] Another example of this form of complementarity is found in Ss. 75 and 76. Both sūrahs deal with the necessity of human accounting on the Day of Judgment. But S. 75 cites human conscience as the basis for the accountability, whereas S. 76 presents the faculty of human reason as evidence, since man must one day account for his use of that faculty.[14]

4. *Difference in Emphasis.* In some cases each of the two sūrahs in a pair emphasizes different aspects of the same theme. Ss. 2 and 3 provide a good example. Both deal with the theme of faith and faith-oriented conduct, the emphasis in S. 2 falls on faith, in S. 3 on faith-oriented conduct. Both discuss the People of the Book, S. 2 focusing on Jews, S. 3 on Christians. Both present arguments based on natural phenomena as well as on earlier scriptures, but S. 2 chiefly presents arguments of the first type, S. 3 of the second type.[15]

5. *Premise and Conclusion.* Some sūrahs are complementary to each other in the sense that one of them states a premise while the other draws a conclusion. This is the case with Ss. 105 and 106 and also with Ss. 107 and 108. S. 105 reminds the Quraysh of God's protection of the Kaᶜbah against a foreign invasion. The conclusion drawn by the next sūrah is that the Quraysh ought to worship only the Lord of the Kaᶜbah.[16] Likewise, S. 107 indicts the Quraysh for being unworthy custodians of the Kaᶜbah, and S. 108 pronounces the punishment: dismissal from the custodianship.[17]

6. *Unity of Opposites.* Sometimes one sūrah in a pair deals with a theme that appears to be the exact opposite of the theme dealt with in the other sūrahs in the pair, but the two themes resolve into a unity because they are in fact no more than the positive and negative sides of the same theme. For example, S. 65 tells Muslims how to observe the *ḥudūd* ("bounds, prescriptions") of God in a relationship of hostility with others, S. 66 tells them how to observe

[13]Ibid., 3:509.

[14]Ibid., 8:71-72, 99.

[15]Ibid., 1:614-615.

[16]Ibid., 8:555-556, 569-570.

[17]Ibid., 8:579-580, 589-590.

these *ḥudūd* in a relationship of love.[18] To take another example, S. 103 portrays people who possess moral excellence and will therefore achieve salvation, and the following sūrah depicts people who are suffering from moral sickness and will therefore be condemned.[19] In each of these pairs, the member sūrahs deal with the positive and negative aspects of the same moral category.

Iṣlāḥī sees other types of complementarity than those listed above. Also, some of the examples cited could be placed in more than one category. But the above account should give a sufficiently clear idea of how, according to Iṣlāḥī, two self-contained sūrahs become, as members of a pair, complementary units in a new whole.

Adjacency and Order

In Iṣlāḥī's scheme a sūrah pair must be composed of adjacent sūrahs only; sūrahs at one or more removes from each other may not form a pair. Also, Iṣlāḥī regards as significant the particular order of the sūrahs constituting a pair, offering Ss. 2 and 3 as an example. As noted above, S. 2 deals with the theme of faith, discusses Jews, and presents arguments from nature, while S. 3 deals with the practical implications of faith, discusses Christians, and presents arguments based on earlier scriptures. Since faith precedes the practice of faith, Jews are historically anterior to Christians, and arguments from nature, being of a general character, have a wider appeal than do arguments from scriptures and are logically prior to the latter, Iṣlāḥī concludes that S. 2 should precede S. 3, as is actually the case in the Qur'ān.[20]

Supplementary Sūrahs

Iṣlāḥī does not think that the existence of supplementary sūrahs infringes the principle of sūrah pairing. In fact he seems to regard these sūrahs as reinforcing his *naẓm* theory. It must be owing to *naẓm* considerations, he seems to be saying, that a certain point, raised in one sūrah, is discussed in detail in a supplementary sūrah, for a detailed discussion of it in the earlier sūrah might have impaired this sūrah's *naẓm*. Moreover, a supplementary sūrah is so closely allied with the preceding sūrah that, for all practical pur-

[18]Ibid., 7:429-430, 451.

[19]Ibid., 8:541.

[20]Ibid., 1:615-616.

poses, it is part of that sūrah and does not need another sūrah with which to form a pair.[21]

Critical Appraisal

With his concept of sūrah pairs, Iṣlāḥī introduces a new element of complexity into Farāhī's *naẓm* theory. Farāhī often talks about the connections between sūrahs, but he is primarily concerned with explaining the *naẓm* of individual sūrahs. Going beyond this, Iṣlāḥī attempts to show that the Qur'ān possesses *naẓm* at the level of sūrah pairs as well. After a careful comparative study of the *naẓm* of the individual sūrahs, he has constructed an elaborate system in which he tries to account for exceptions to what he sees as a regularly applied principle. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Iṣlāḥī's concept?

1. To begin with, the concept reinforces the essential thesis of chapter III, namely, that the Qur'ān possesses method and coherence. By highlighting the complementary character of the Qur'ānic sūrahs, Iṣlāḥī advances a strong argument for his sūrah pairs. The complementarity of sūrahs has a two-fold significance, thematic and structural.

On the thematic level, the notion of complementarity presents the *ᶜamūds* and contents of the paired sūrahs in a sharper outline. In chapter III[22] we compared Farāhī's and Iṣlāḥī's statements about the *ᶜamūd* of S. 66 and remarked that the latter's statement is the more accurate. The greater accuracy is perhaps explained by the comparison, or contrast, drawn by Iṣlāḥī between the two sūrahs' *ᶜamūds* (see above). The notion of complementarity also explains why some sūrahs make statements without substantiating them, set down principles without sufficiently illustrating them, and present only certain types of proofs. It is in the companion sūrahs that one must look for substantiation of the statements, illustration of the principles, and other types of proofs.

On the structural level, the complementarity of sūrahs clarifies certain aspects of the structure of Qur'ānic sūrahs. Sometimes the amount of space devoted to a certain theme in a sūrah may strike one as disproportionately small. In the companion sūrah, however, the theme will probably be discussed in greater detail. What is dis-

[21]Ibid., 1:xiv; 4:491; 6:479.

[22]In n. 38.

proportionate in the context of a single sūrah thus becomes proportionate in the context of a sūrah pair. Again, some sūrahs appear to make an abrupt start (like Ss. 9 and 21) or to come to an abrupt end (like Ss. 22 and 67). But the abruptness will disappear when the sūrahs are considered together with their companion sūrahs (respectively, Ss. 8 and 20, and 23 and 66).

Thus, by bringing out aspects of interdependency between sūrahs, the principle of sūrah pairs presents the Qur'ān as a book that is characterized by clear features of design and coherence, invalidating those approaches to the Qur'ān that are grounded in the belief that the Qur'ān is a disjointed work.

2. But this is not to say that there are no problems with Iṣlāḥī's concept. There are, first of all, sūrahs that do not fit into Iṣlāḥī's scheme of pairing and that may be called "single" sūrahs. Now these single sūrahs would probably not pose a serious challenge to his concept if Iṣlāḥī had only wanted to state a general principle that applied to most sūrahs but not necessarily to all of them. But Iṣlāḥī seeks to formulate a rigorous scheme of pairing that would hardly allow for any exceptions. This being the case, the single sūrahs constitute a major problem.

At one place in *Tadabbur* Iṣlāḥī calls Ss. 55 and 56 a pair,[23] while later on he calls Ss. 56 and 57 a pair.[24] The discrepancy is evidently an oversight on Iṣlāḥī's part, for the natural pairs would be Ss. 54 and 55, and Ss. 56 and 57—which would explain the otherwise problematic position of S. 54.

The relationship between Ss. 46, 47, 48 is an unresolved issue in Iṣlāḥī's scheme. The two preceding sūrahs (44 and 45) are listed by him as a pair, and S. 49 as supplementary (see above). Ss. 46, 47, and 48 thus cause a problem because they cannot form two separate pairs, nor is any of them called supplementary by Iṣlāḥī. There can be only pair, 46-47 or 47-48, but Iṣlāḥī's discussion of these sūrahs[25] does not help in identifying the right pair. One might be inclined to see Ss. 47-48 as a pair, but this would leave the status of S. 48 unexplained.

Similarly it is not clear what the status of S. 60 is. It stands alone between two pairs (Ss. 58-59 and Ss. 61-62), and can only be

[23]Ibid., 7:143.

[24]Ibid., 7:191.

[25]Ibid., 6:[illegible], [illegible], 431, respectively.

supplementary to Ss. 59. But Iṣlāḥī's description of it[26] does not provide any indication of that; neither does the sūrah's content.

The position of Ss. 63 and 64 is not clear either. The two preceding sūrahs (61 and 62) form a pair, as do the two following ones (65 and 66). If Ss. 63 and 64 formed another pair, there would be no problem. But at one point Iṣlāḥī seems to consider S. 63 as supplementary to S. 62.[27] If this is the case, S. 64 cannot form a pair with S. 63. If it is made supplementary to S. 63, we will have the odd result of one supplementary sūrah supplementing another. As if to compound the difficulty, Iṣlāḥī says that Ss. 65 and 66 are supplementary to S. 64.[28] There seems to be a certain lack of clarity in Iṣlāḥī's terminology at this point. The expressions he generally uses to describe a supplementary sūrah are *takmilah, tatimmah,* and *ḍamīmah,*[29] all three words meaning "supplement" or "appendix." But sometimes he uses these expressions loosely, that is, for sūrahs that are not "supplementary" in the strict sense of the word. His statement that Ss. 65 and 66 are supplementary (*takmilah* and *tatimmah*) to S. 64 thus complicates matters. S. 83 is likewise called by him supplementary to S. 82,[30] though elsewhere he seems to imply that it is a companion to S. 84.[31]

3. According to Iṣlāḥī, only adjacent sūrahs may form pairs. But the rule of adjacency seems to break down at least at a few points. Ss. 77 and 78 are a pair. But Iṣlāḥī himself observes that the first of these bears a marked similarity to S. 51 on the one hand and to S. 55 on the other.[32] Ss. 69 and 70 are yet another pair. But Iṣlāḥī notes that S. 69 closely resembles Ss. 56 and 68.[33] Could one therefore suggest that the rule of adjacency be set aside as an overriding principle and sūrahs like 51 and 77, 55 and 71, and 56 and 69 be considered as pairs? On the other hand, and as an argument against

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[26]Ibid., 7:319.

[27]Ibid., 7:393.

[28]Ibid., 7:430.

[29]See, for example, ibid., 4:491; 6:479.

[30]Ibid., 8:249.

[31]Ibid., 8:267. See also ibid., 2:9, where Iṣlāḥ calls S. 4 supplementary to S. 3, whereas, quite obviously, S. 3 forms a pair with S. 2, and S. 4 with S. 5.

[32]Ibid., 8:123.

[33]Ibid., 7:535.

the foregoing, one could maintain that at least as far as the issue of the composition of the Qur'ān is concerned, the question of similarity in content matter between non-adjacent sūrahs is an issue quite different from that of the existence of pairs of adjacent sūrahs. The position taken on this issue would also decide whether one would want to explore the possibility that some sūrahs form triplets or even quadruplets. Iṣlāḥī's own account of the sūrahs does not wholly exclude such a possibility, since at times he refers to the similar content matter of more than two sūrahs. Thus Ss. 52, 53, and 54 could be considered a triplet, and Ss. 56, 68, 69, and 70 a quadruplet.

A final question to be raised is whether Iṣlāḥī has not overemphasized the irreversibility of the order in which the member sūrahs of a pair occur in the Qur'ān. Further study could clarify whether, in some cases at least, it would make any difference if the order of the sūrahs were reversed.

4. As noted earlier, the notion of complementarity underlies Iṣlāḥī's concept of sūrah pairing. Another critical issue, then, is whether applying the various types of complementarity one would be justified in linking adjacent sūrahs *not* regarded as pairs by Iṣlāḥī, e.g. Ss. 13 and 14[34], 70 and 71,[35] and 74 and 75.[36]

5. As for the *aḥādīth* that Muḥammad used to recite certain combinations of sūrahs (sūrah pairs in Iṣlāḥī's scheme), there are as many *aḥādīth* that indicate that Muḥammad often combined in prayer sūrahs that do not form pairs in Iṣlāḥī's scheme, e.g. Ss. 21 and 50,[37] 33 and 88, and 62 and 88,[38] and 109 and 111.[39] A cursory look at the "Comprehensive Chapter on Qur'ān-Recitation in Prayer" in the "Book of Prayer" in the *Nayl al-Awṭār* of Muḥammad ibn ᶜAlī ash-Shawkānī (d. 1255/1839) will show that Muḥammad was quite flexible in his choice of sūrahs for purposes of recitation in prayer.[40]

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[34]Ibid., 3:551.

[35]Ibid., 7:585.

[36]Ibid., 7:71.

[37]Muslim, "Kitāb Ṣalāt al-ᶜĪdayn, Bāb Mā Yuqra'u fī Ṣalāt al-ᶜĪdayn."

[38]Ibid., "Kitāb al-Jumuᶜah, Bāb Mā Yuqra'u fī Yawm al-Jumuᶜah."

[39]Nasā'ī, "Kitāb Iftitāḥ aṣ-Ṣalāh, Bāb al-Qirā'ah fī r-Rakᶜatayn qabl al-Maghrib."

[40]Shawkānī, 2:255-261. See also Suyūṭī, *Durr,* 5:140.

Summary

According to Iṣlāḥī, the sūrahs of the Qur'ān, as a rule, are paired; the few exceptions to this rule fit into the overall scheme of pairing. A sūrah pair is made up of two specific adjacent sūrahs that usually deal with the same ^{c}*amūd*, but always complement each other in one or more significant ways. Although Iṣlāḥī has effectively shown that the companion sūrahs in his sūrah pairs possess definite patterns of complementarity, it may be questioned as to exactly how fixed those patterns are. By means of this concept, Iṣlāḥī has sought to bring to light some of the hitherto unperceived aspects of design and coherence in the Qur'ān.

Chapter VI

THE SŪRAH GROUPS

According to Iṣlāḥī, not only are the Qur'ānic sūrahs paired, but they also combine to form a number of larger groups. Iṣlāḥī has borrowed the idea of sūrah-grouping from Farāhī. But the idea exists only in a rudimentary form in Farāhī, who did not live to work it out. Iṣlāḥī develops it into elaborate concept with well-defined features. His treatment of it is, thus, original to a very large extent.

In Farāhī's view, the Qur'ānic sūrahs fall into nine groups. In Iṣlāḥī the number is reduced to seven, the groups consisting of the following sūrahs: G. I: Ss. 1-5; G. II: Ss. 6-9; G. III: Ss. 10-24 (in Farāhī this group is split into two: Ss. 10-22 and Ss. 23-24); G. IV: Ss. 25-33; G. V: Ss. 34-49; G. VI: Ss. 50-66; G. VII: 67-114 (in Farāhī, this group is also split into two: Ss. 67-112 and Ss. 113-114).[1] As can be seen, the difference between Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī is not major one. In point of detail and elaboration, however, Iṣlāḥī represents definite advance over Farāhī.

Coherence

Like the individual sūrahs of the Qur'ān, each sūrah group has a distinctive ^{c}*amūd* or theme.[2] Each of the sūrahs in the group singles out a particular aspect of that ^{c}*amūd*. The ^{c}*amūd*, moroever, describes a logical course of development in the sūrahs of the group, and, in order to trace that development, the existing sequence of the sūrahs must be kept intact. In other words, a group is marked by both thematic and structural coherence. This coherence can be illustrated with reference to G. II.

G. II is composed of Ss. 6-9—*al-An*^{c}*ām* ("The Cattle"), *al-A*^{c}*rāf*, ("The Heights"), *al-Anfāl* ("The Spoils"), and *at-Tawbah* ("Repentance"), in that order. The ^{c}*amūd* of the group is: Islam as

[1] Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, I:xii-xiii. Farāhī, *Dalā'il*, pp. 92-93.

[2] Each group contains themes from the other groups, but such themes are subsidiary to a group's own ^{c}*amūd*

the religion of Abraham.[3] The Quraysh claimed to be the followers of Abraham and heirs to the religion established by him. *Al-An^c^ām* accuses them of distorting that religion, presents Islam as the true Abrahamic religion, and invites them to become Muslims.[4] Since the Quraysh were the direct recipients of the Islamic message, the next sūrah, *al-A^c^rāf*, warns them of the grave consequences of rejecting the message.[5] The third sūrah, *al-Anfāl*, instructs the Muslims to unite under the banner of Islam in preparation for confrontation with the Quraysh.[6] *At-Tawbah*, the last sūrah in the group, presents an ultimatum to the Quraysh, who, as the immediate addressees of the Qur'ān, had to choose between Islam and war.[7]

The four sūrahs would thus appear to be systematically arranged in the Qur'ān. *Al-An^c^ām* is the sūrah of invitation: it invites the Quraysh to embrace Islam. *Al-A^c^rāf* is the sūrah of warning: it warns the Quraysh against repudiating Islam. *Al-Anfāl* is the sūrah of preparation: it instructs the Muslims to prepare for war against the Quraysh. And *at-Tawbah* is the sūrah of war: it announces war against the Quraysh because they have been unfaithful to the religion of Abraham, declares Muslims to be the rightful heirs to that religion, and replaces the Quraysh by Muslims as the custodians of the Ka^c^bah—the symbol and legacy of Abrahamic religion.[8]

This is an incisive analysis of the sūrahs, and would stand the test of a close study of them. The sūrahs' *^c^amūds*, as stated by Islāhī, would seem to impart thematic coherence to the group. It will be

[3]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 1:xiii; 2:385. Here, briefly, are the *^c^amūds* of the seven groups as identified by Iṣlāḥī: I: The *Sharī^c^ah* or Law; II: Abrahamic Religion; III: The Struggle between Truth and Falsehood and the Divine Law Concerning It; IV: Prophecy; V: *Tawḥīd* or the Oneness of God; VI: The Hereafter; VII: *Indhār* or Warning to the Disbelievers. Ibid., 1:xiii.

[4]Ibid., 2:385, 386, 387.

[5]Ibid., 2:385, 591. Iṣlāḥī makes a distinction between a *rasūl* ("messenger") and a *nabī* ("prophet"). Both perform essentially the same function, namely, that of delivering the message of God to mankind. But, unlike a *nabī*, a *rasūl* presents the people who are his direct and immediate addressees with a final warning. See, for example, ibid., 1:434 (also the note on that page), 697. Muḥammad's message was addressed directly and immediately to the Arabs, indirectly and mediately to the rest of mankind. Ibid., 3:150-151.

[6]Ibid., 2:385; 3:9-10.

[7]Ibid., 2:385; 3:113-114.

[8]Ibid., 2:385-386.

agreed, moreover, that Iṣlāḥī succeeds in establishing a logical sequential connection between the sūrahs. We will now examine in some detail the nature of the coherence of a sūrah group.

One measure of coherence in a group is the extent to which a group is demonstrably self-contained and marked off from the others. A close look at G. II will suggest that Iṣlāḥī's scheme has essential validity.

The group preceding G. II consists, with the exception of the short *al-Fātiḥah* (which is prefatory to G. I but also to the whole of the Qur'ān), of four long sūrahs. The *^c^amūd* of G. I is the *Sharī^c^ah* or Law. Now this group deals with the People of the Book, who possessed the Law in the form of the Torah. Throughout the group the Qur'ān cites incidents and makes comments which achieve full significance only when placed against that background. The detailed theological discussions of Ss. 2 and 3 are a case in point. Any references the Qur'ān makes to the Quraysh in these sūrahs are, in the context of the group, incidental.[9]

When we come to G. II, we are struck by a complete shift of scenes. The background to this group is provided by the conflict between the Muslims and the Quraysh. Compared with G. I, G. II contains fewer references to the pre-Qur'ānic scriptures. On the other hand, arguments from nature, Arab history, etc., abound, for it is arguments of these types that would make the most sense to the Arabs Muḥammad was addressing.[10] In short, just as the whole tenor of G. I is suited to a dialogue with the People of the Book, so the whole tenor of G. II is suited to a dialogue with the Quraysh. As one passes from G. I to G. II, one feels that a distinct change of "atmospheric zones" has taken place.

A similar change of atmospheric zones will be felt upon moving from G. II to G. III. The *^c^amūd* of G. II, having reached its culmination in S. 9 with the declaration of war, is no longer prominent in S. 10 onward. And the tone of the sūrahs of G. III is strikingly different from the tone of the sūrahs of G. II, something that can easily be verified by a comparative study, for example, of Ss. 9 and 10. There is thus reason to believe that Iṣlāḥī's groups are well-differentiated and self-contained.

An interesting fact about the four sūrahs of G. II is that each of the last three of them reaches its high point sooner than the

[9]Ibid., 1:32, 611-615, 616; 2:386.

[10]Ibid., 2:386.

preceding one, thereby accelerating the overall movement of the sūrahs toward the finale, that is, toward the realization of the group's *ᶜamūd*. In *al-Anᶜām,* the high point is reached in vs. 74-90,[11] where a striking incident from Abraham's life, together with a pithy summary of the teachings of the prophets in the Abrahamic line, brings out the true character of Abraham's religion. The first 73 verses lead up to this passage, while the verses that follow it may be called the dénouement. In *al-Aᶜrāf,* the series of stories of earlier peoples illustrating the sūrah's *ᶜamūd* begins with vs. 59. In *al-Anfāl,* one hardly gets past the first few verses when detailed references to the Battle of Badr begin to appear, thus determining the mood of the whole sūrah. In *at-Tawbah,* war is proclaimed in the very opening verse.

G. I, too, exemplifies this kind of accelerated movement. The *ᶜamūd* of the group, as we have noted, is the Law. In the second sūrah, *al-Baqarah,* the subject is not taken up until vs. 177. In the third sūrah, *āl ᶜImrān,* the part of legal injunctions can be said to have begun with vs. 92. In *an-Nisā'* the legal part begins with vs. 2, and in *al-Mā'idah* with vs. 1.

We will now qualify our statement about the relationship between the sūrahs of a group. Gs. I and II, which we have cited to illustrate the statement, are both groups with long sūrahs. But while it may be easy to identify high points and dénouements in a long sūrah because of the sūrah's large canvas, it may not be easy to do so in the case of shorter sūrahs. For example, the sūrahs in Gs. VI and VII gradually become shorter and shorter as we move toward the end, making it increasingly difficult for one to establish between them the kind of relationship that seems to exist between the sūrahs of Gs. I and II. Even in Gs. VI and VII, however, some kind of "onward movement" can be seen to be taking place. To take the example of G. VII, there is a conspicuous difference between its earlier and later sūrahs. A number of the earlier sūrahs are, relatively speaking, discursive: they present the group's *ᶜamūd*—warning to the disbelievers[12]—in some detail and draw conclusions after adducing evidence of several types. As such, they can be said to be moving at a somewhat "leisurely" pace. By contrast, many later sūrahs (especially Ss. 109-111) have a decisive tone: instead of giving details, they present conclusions in categorical terms. Since they

[11] Ibid., 2:460.

[12] Ibid., 8:479.

come to grips with the group's *ᶜamūd* in a direct and forthright manner, they can be said to be "rushing" toward that *ᶜamūd*. One's overall impression is likely to be that the discursiveness of the group's earlier sūrahs gradually builds an atmosphere in which the decisiveness of the later sūrahs becomes relevant. An in-depth study of this and other groups may reveal that they, too, contain a structural pattern very similar to the one found in Gs. I and II.

The Makkan-Madīnan Division

Each of Iṣlāḥī's groups contains at least one Makkan and one Madīnan sūrah. Moreover, the Makkan and Madīnan sūrahs in any group form distinct blocs, with the Makkan bloc preceding the Madīnan. Here, following, is Iṣlāḥī's group-wise breakdown of the Makkan and Madīnan sūrahs.[13]

G. I: Ss. 1-5 (S. 1 Makkan, Ss. 2-5 Madīnan).
G. II: Ss. 6-9 (Ss. 6-7 Makkan, Ss. 8-9 Madīnan).
G. III: Ss. 10-24 (Ss. 10-23 Makkan, S. 24 Madīnan).
G. IV: Ss. 25-33 (Ss. 25-32 Makkan, S. 33 Madīnan).
G. V: Ss. 34-49 (Ss. 34-46 Makkan, Ss. 47-49 Madīan).
G. VI: Ss. 50-66 (Ss. 50-56 Makkan, Ss. 57-66 Madīnan).
G. VII: Ss. 67-114 (Ss. 67-109 Makkan, Ss. 110-114 Madīnan.)

A problem arises here. In suggesting this division of the sūrahs into Makkan and Madīnan, Iṣlāḥī departs on a few points from the division (or divisions) traditionally given. A a comparison of Iṣlāḥī's division with for example that given by Zarkashī will show that the former differs from the latter in respect of eight sūrahs: 13, 22, 55, 76, 98, 99, 111, and 112. Zarkashī lists the first six of these as Madīnan and the last two as Makkan sūrahs,[14] while Iṣlāḥī calls the first six Makkan and the last two Madīnan. If Zarkashī's division is correct, then the distinction Iṣlāḥī establishes between the Makkan and Madīnan blocs will be called in question. On the other hand, if Iṣlāḥī's division is correct, then it will be the traditional view, as represented by Zarkashī, that will be called in question.

Iṣlāḥī seems to be on safe ground with respect to five of the eight sūrahs: 13, 22, 55, 76, and 99. The internal evidence of Ss. 55, 76, and 99 clearly marks them as Makkan. Ss. 55 and 76, at any

[13] Ibid., 1:xii-xiii; 7:479.

[14] Zarkashī, 1:193-194.

rate, are regarded as Makkan by many commentators.[15] But there is no reason why the same may not be said of S. 99, which deals with an obvious Makkan theme.[16]

Except for its 41st verse, S. 13 also strikes one as unmistakably Makkan. The verse runs: "Have they not seen that We are approaching the land [Makkah], shrinking its borders?" Commentators have understood this to be a reference to the Madīnah-based military expansion of Islam which had begun to threaten the Quraysh in Makkah. Rejecting this view, Iṣlāḥī says that the verse makes reference to the popularity of the Islamic message in the Makkan phase of Muḥammad's prophecy. The message was first presented before the Quraysh, who refused to accept it. In the meantime, it became popular among the tribes outside Makkah and even attracted a number of Madīnans. The Quraysh now sensed that Islam, which they had tried to eradicate inside Makkah, had struck root outside Makkah, and had in fact begun to close in on them. As verse 40 of the same sūrah clearly suggests, the Quraysh had demanded evidence for the Qur'ānic claim that paganism would suffer defeat at the hands of Islam. Verse 41 replies to this demand, saying: If the Quraysh want to see a sign, then the fact that they are being hemmed in by it in their own home is surely one. Iṣlāḥī also points out—and this is a strong argument for the position he takes—that 21:44 is an almost identical verse, and that S. 21 is unanimously considered to be Makkan.[17] Although a number of other scholars, too, consider S. 13 to be Makkan,[18] Iṣlāḥī, to my knowledge, is the first scholar to have furnished clear proof of its being Makkan. And the proof, it will be observed, is adduced on the basis of a *naẓm* interpretation of the verses involved.

The same kind of *naẓm* approach is employed by Iṣlāḥī in his discussion of S. 22. Vss. 38-41, revealed in Madīnah, have led many to believe that the sūrah is Madīnan. But, Iṣlāḥī argues, the inclusion of a few Madīnan verses in an otherwise Makkan sūrah would not make it Madīnan; the long concluding verse of S. 73, for

[15]On S. 55, see Mawdūdī, 5:244-246; and Suyūṭī, *Durr*, 6:139. On S. 76, see Mawdūdī, 6:180-182; and Suyūṭī, *Durr*, 6:297.

[16]Cf. Mawdūdī, 6:418.

[17]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 3:546-547.

[18]See, for example, Sayyid Quṭb, 4:2039, n. 2; and Mawdūdī, 2:440.

instance, is Madīnan, but the sūrah is considered Makkan by all.[19] Moreover, vss. 38-41 of S. 22, being parenthetical in character,[20] simply explain a thought already presented in vs. 25, a Makkan verse that criticizes the Quraysh for preventing the Muslims from performing rites at the Kaᶜbah, with vss. 38-41 permitting the Muslims to use force if force is used by the Quraysh to stop them from worshipping at the Kaᶜbah.[21] Iṣlāḥī's argument, in other words, is that a few parenthetical and explanatory verses may not change the status of an otherwise through-and-through Makkan sūrah.

S. 99 is highly controversial when it comes to identifying it as Makkan or Madīnan. Some think that it is definitely Makkan; others, that it is certainly Madīnan. The reason for such a sharp difference, Mawdūdī points out, is that the sūrah itself does not provide support for either view.[22] But Iṣlāḥī contends that it is Makkan and that it was revealed at a time when the People of the Book, especially the Jews of Madīnah, were filled with consternation at the steady gains of Islam in Arabia. That is why, says Iṣlāḥī, the sūrah makes such a pronounced reference to the People of the Book.[23] The argument is plausible, but perhaps not conclusive. The sūrah does not have to be Madīnan for the People of the Book to be filled with consternation at the gains of Islam. A similar criticism would apply to Iṣlāḥī's view of S. 112. Iṣlāḥī maintains that the sūrah is Madīnan and that it was meant to serve as a final summing up of the creed of Islam as distinguished from the other creeds of Arabia.[24] Also, there are conflicting reports about its being Makkan or Madīnan.[25]

It is S. 111 that causes the most difficulty. There is universal agreement that it is Makkan,[26] and Iṣlāḥī appears to be the only one to have called it Madīnan. The traditional view, as reproduced by

[19]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 4:341.

[20]Ibid., 4:396.

[21]Ibid., 4:389-390.

[22]Mawdūdī, 6:410.

[23]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 8:473-474. See also ibid., 6:527-528.

[24]Ibid., 8:643-644.

[25]See Mawdūdī, 6:530-532. Mawdūdī argues that it is Makkan, and an early Makkan sūrah at that. Ibid., 6:532.

[26]Ibid., 6:520.

Iṣlāḥī, is as follows. Early in his prophetic career, Muḥammad once gathered together the families of the Quraysh and warned them of the punishment that lay in store for them in case they rejected his message. Abū Lahab, Muḥammad's uncle, sarcastically commented: *Tabban laka a li hādhā daᶜawtanā* ("Curse on you! Is this what you called us here for?").[27]

Iṣlāḥī's criticism of the view is twofold. In the first place, it is out of character for the Qur'ān to offer a tu quoque argument like that. Many leaders of Makkah and Ṭā'if were guilty of insulting Muḥammad, but the Qur'ān never returned the abuse, in fact never called Muḥammad's opponents "disbelievers" until their hostility exceeded all bounds and they could not be excused any longer. In the second place, the sūrah's *tabbat yadā Abī Lahabin* (lit., "May the hands of Abū Lahab be broken") has a meaning very different than Abū Lahab's *tabban laka*... The latter is imprecatory, and hence what is called *inshā'* in Arabic grammar.[28] But the former comes from an Arabic idiom (*tabbat yadā fulānin*) which is non-imprecatory and implies, in a non-pejorative sense, that a person has failed to achieve his object, counter an attack, or ward off something unpleasant. The verse, in other words, simply makes the prediction (made in the past tense to indicate that it is as good as come true) that the power of Abū Lahab—the "high priest," and therefore the religious leader, of Makkah—will be broken. As such the verse is, grammatically, a *khabar*.[29] The prediction was fulfilled in the early Madīnan period when clear signs of Abū Lahab's downfall appeared. An important sign was the defeat of the Quraysh, the mainstay of Abū Lahab's power, at the Battle of Badr, which took place in 2/624; Abū Lahab himself died soon after that. The sūrah, then, must have been revealed at Madīnah.[30]

Iṣlāḥī's criticism of the traditional view is sound. But does it necessarily follow that his own interpretation of the sūrah is valid? Perhaps not. What Iṣlāḥī has demonstrated is the weakness of a view whose claim to validity rests on the supposed existence of a

[27]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 8:628-629.

[28]Statements which cannot be confirmed or refuted by inquiry (in Arabic: *lā taḥtamilu t-taṣdīqa awi t-takdhība* are called *jumal inshā'iyyah* ("sentences characterized by *inshā'*.") Sentences expressing command, wish, etc., fall in this category.

[29]Statements which may be confirmed or refuted by inquiry are called *jumal khabariyyah* ("declarative sentences").

[30]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 8:629-630.

connection between a particular event that took place in Makkah and the revelation of the sūrah. But even if it is shown that the sūrah could not have been revealed in connection with that event, there still would exist the possibility that it bears a connection to some other event that took place in Makkah, or indeed to the general Makkan situation, in which Abū Lahab always played a role hostile to Muḥammad.[31] Moreover, the argument Iṣlāḥī advances in support of the view that it is an *early Madīnan* sūrah may be advanced in support of the view that it is a *late Makkan* sūrah. Thus Farāhī is of the view that the sūrah was revealed a little before the Emigration to Madīnah.[32]

These few reservations aside, Iṣlāḥī's scheme, seen from the viewpoint of the structural arrangement of the Makkan and Madīnan sūrahs in the groups, will be found to be quite consistent. But the question is: What thematic significance, if any, does this arrangement have? This brings us to a consideration of the relationship between the Makkan and Madīnan sūrahs of the groups.

According to Iṣlāḥī, the Madīnan sūrahs of a group are related to its Makkan sūrahs as the branches of a tree are related to the root of the tree.[33] This simple analogy has, in the context of Iṣlāḥī's *naẓm* theory, the following implications: 1) that the relationship between the two sets of sūrahs in a group is integral; 2) that the Madīnan sūrahs of a group bring out the practical implications of the doctrinal statements made in the group's Makkan sūrahs; and 3) that the Makkan bloc of sūrahs in a group precedes the Madīnan not by accident but by design, since the "root" must exist before the "branches". G. II would serve to illustrate this point.

Al-Anᶜām and *al-Aᶜrāf*, the two Makkan sūrahs of G. II, precede *al-Anfāl* and *at-Tawbah*, the two Madīnan sūrahs. From what was said in the earlier part of the article about the four sūrahs it would be easy to conclude that the first two deal mainly with theoretical and the last two mainly with practical matters, and that, moreover, the practical issues of the last two sūrahs stem from the

[31]Thus Mawdūdī (6:520-524) refers to the general hostile attitude of Abū Lahab and his wife, and not to a single event, as what occasioned the sūrah's revelation.

[32]Farāhī, *Dalā'il*, p. 93.

[33]Iṣlāḥī, 1:xiii-xiv

theoretical issues raised in the first two—that, in short, the four sūrahs develop the same basic *ʿamūd*.[34]

But even if it is granted that all the sūrahs in a certain group are related to the group's *ʿamūd*, the question remains: Is each and every one of them related to that *ʿamūd* in an integral way? It would appear that the connection of the Madīnan sūrahs to their group's *ʿamūd* is not as intimate as that of the Makkan. A look at G. VI will help drive the point home.

G. VI is composed of seventeen sūrahs, seven Makkan (50-56) and ten Madīnan (57-66). Iṣlāḥī's interpretation of the sūrahs' *ʿamūds* strongly suggests that the *ʿamūd* of the group, namely, the hereafter,[35] is systematically developed in the successive sūrahs. S. 50 examines and refutes the view that the hereafter is a theoretical impossibility.[36] S. 51 talks about the purpose of the hereafter, which is: recompensing human beings for their good and evil actions.[37] S. 52 isolates the retributive aspect of recompense.[38] S. 53 negates the idea that, on the Day of Judgment, any kind of intercession will subvert divine justice.[39] In response to the disbelievers' demand for a "sign" of the threatened punishment, S. 54 points to history as furnishing all the necessary signs.[40] To these signs S. 55 adds signs from nature and the human existential situation.[41] S. 56 summarizes the contents of Ss. 50–55.[42]

This is a remarkably cogent account of the *ʿamūds* of the seven sūrahs, and the *ʿamūds* do seem to be different aspects of the group's *ʿamūd*. Also, no sooner do we reach the Madīnan part (i.e.

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[34]Iṣlāḥī's view of the relationship between the Makkan and Madīnan sūrahs is subject to criticism, and we will shortly offer that criticism. However, he has at least shown that there is no complete break between the Makkan and Madīnan sūrahs, as is held by some Orientalist scholars, for example by Goldziher, pp. 9-12. For a criticism of the Orientalist position, see Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes,* Chapter 8.

[35]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 6:527.

[36]Ibid., 6:528.

[37]Ibid., 6:575.

[38]Ibid., 7:11.

[39]Ibid., 7:45.

[40]Ibid., 7:87.

[41]Ibid., 7:120.

[42]Ibid., 7:153.

S. 57 onward) than practical injunctions become prominent. At the same time, one cannot help feeling that the relationship of a number of the Madīnan sūrahs (especially Ss. 60, 61, 63, and 66) to the group's *ʿamūd* is not as clear-cut and definite as that of the Makkan. To take the example of S. 60, only one verse in it (vs. 12) explicitly talks about the hereafter; the four other references to the hereafter (vss. 4, 5, 6, 13) are either too brief or quite indirect. Moreover, it is difficult to see why the injunctions contained in the sūrah must follow exclusively from the *ʿamūd* of the hereafter, and why they may not follow, equally logically, from the *ʿamūd* of prophecy (the *ʿamūd*, according to Iṣlāḥī, of G. IV[43]) or from that of the oneness of God (the *ʿamūd* of G. V[44]). A related criticism is that several Madīnan sūrahs would be "at home" in groups other than the ones they actually occur in. For example, according to Iṣlāḥī, S. 58 states that, in the end, God and His prophets triumph, their opponents suffering humiliating defeat.[45] But this is exactly what Iṣlāḥī describes as the *ʿamūd* of G. III.[46] The question is: Would S. 58 be out of place in G. III? Again, S. 66, with its injunctions about divorce (vss. 1-7), reminds one of G. I, the second and fourth sūrahs of which deal with the issue of marriage and divorce in similar terms.

Account of the Islamic Movement

Iṣlāḥī holds that each sūrah group presents a phase-by-phase account of the spread, under Muḥammad's leadership, of the Islamic movement in Arabia, though, he adds, the actual manner o presentation of that account may vary from one group to another.[47] This statement would be correct only in a very broad sense. Sinc the advent of Islam resulted in a struggle between the Muslims an their opponents, the main phases of the Islamic movement ma roughly be stated as: presentation of the Islamic message; accep tance of the message by some and resistance to it by others; conflic between the believers and the disbelievers; victory of the forme

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[43]Ibid., 4:571.

[44]Ibid., 5:283.

[45]Ibid., 7:243, 279.

[46]Ibid., 3:260.

[47]Ibid., 1:xlv.

over the latter. Once again, G. II offers a good example of the development of the Islamic movement along those lines.

It is doubtful, however, that each group relates such a development in a systematic manner. In fact, the very composition of some of Iṣlāḥī's groups militates against such a view. G. I, for example, has five sūrahs, and, excepting the short opening sūrah, all of them are Madīnan. Obviously the Makkan period has not been dealt with in the group at any length. It is true that there are references in the sūrahs to the Makkan period. But to say that the group offers a well-articulated account of the various phases of the Islamic movement would be to claim too much. Likewise, G. III has fifteen Makkan sūrahs, but only one Madīnan sūrah; and G. IV has only one Madīnan as against eight Makkan sūrahs. Again, the Madīnan period, even though it may have been referred to in the Makkan sūrahs of the two groups, hardly finds a well-differentiated treatment in the groups. Furthermore, almost any cross-section of sūrahs will be found to have treated all or most of the phases of the Islamic movement; one does not have to regard such a treatment as characteristic of Iṣlāḥī's groups only.

Sanction for the *Naẓm* Scheme

Iṣlāḥī maintains that his *naẓm* scheme, with its component ideas of sūrah pairs and sūrah groups, finds sanction in the Qur'ān itself. He cites 15:87 (and also 39:23) in support of his view.

15:87 reads: "We have bestowed upon you *sab^{c}an mina l-mathānī* and the Great Qur'ān". *Sab^{c}an mina l-mathānī* is usually interpreted as the "seven oft-repeated ones" and thought to refer to S. 1, since this sūrah, it is argued, has seven verses and is repeated in every ritual prayer.[48] Iṣlāḥī disagrees with this interpretation. The word *mathānī* in his view refers to what he believes is the phenomenon of sūrah pairs in the Qur'ān. Against the traditionally accepted view he argues, first, that the exact number of the verses of the sūrah is not agreed upon, that it can have seven verses only if the formulaic *basmalah* is counted as a verse, which is a controversial matter; and, second, that *mathānī*, as the plural of *mathnā*, means "in two's" (as in 4:3 and 36:46) and not "oft-repeated ones." It, therefore, means "those arranged in pairs." As for the conjunction *wāw* after *mathānī* in the verse, its grammatical function is explica-

[48]See, for example, Nīsābūrī, 6:34.

tion (*tafsīr*). The verse accordingly means: "... seven [= seven sūrah groups] made up of the *mathānī* [= sūrah pairs], that is, the Great Qur'ān." There are a few *aḥādīth* that term S. 1 *mathānī*. But Iṣlāḥī thinks that they refer to the sūrah only insofar as the sūrah, epitomizing as it does the Qur'ān, may be called the Qur'ān in miniature. In other words, even in those *aḥādīth*, the word *mathānī* refers to the Qur'ān or Qur'ānic sūrahs, pointing out that the sūrahs are paired.[49]

As for the word *sab^{c}*, it refers, according to Iṣlāḥī, to what he regards as the seven sūrah groups.[50] And Iṣlāḥī thinks that the well-known *ḥadīth* in which the Qur'ān has been described as having been revealed *^{c}alā sab^{c}ati aḥrufin* substantiates this view. The Arabic phrase is usually translated "in seven readings" and taken to refer to the variant Qur'ānic readings. But Iṣlāḥī shows—and convincingly, I think—that such an interpretation, besides making the Qur'ān a very problematic work, is untenable on liguistic and historical grounds as well.[51] According to him, the word *ḥarf* (sing. of *aḥruf*) in this context means "aspect, style, dimension" and, as such, refers to the seven sūrah groups in the Qur'ān, each of the groups representing a distinctive aspect or dimension of the Qur'ānic message and employing a method or style of discussion peculiar to that group, the seven groups together bringing out the diversity-in-unity that is characteristic of the Qur'ān.[52]

But even if Iṣlāḥī's criticism of the traditional interpretation of the word *aḥruf* were to be granted, it would be difficult to say that his own interpretation of the word is absolutely correct. For one thing, one might ask why the word *sab^{c}* may not refer to the seven *manāzil* ("stations," i.e. parts; sing., *manzil*) into which the Qur'ān is traditionally divided for purposes of completing one Qur'ān-recitation in a week.[53] For another, is it not possible that the word *sab^{c}* gives here the sense of "many" or "numerous" and does not denote "seven"? If so, then it would be questionable to take it to refer to seven specific groups.

[49]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 3:622-624. See also ibid., 5:580; 7:480-481.

[50]Ibid., 1:xv; 3:624.

[51]Ibid., 7:480-481.

[52]Ibid., 3:622-624. See also ibid., 5:580; 7:480-481.

[53]The *manzil* division of the Qur'ānic sūrahs is as follows: I:1-4; II:5-9; III:10-16; IV:17-25; V:26-36; VI:37:49; VII:50-114.

Summary

The Qur'ānic sūrahs, in their present order, fall into seven groups. Like an individual sūrah or a sūrah pair, a sūrah group has an *ᶜamūd* of its own, which is developed in a fairly methodical manner in the sūrahs of that group. Structural as well as thematic coherence marks a group. Barring a few controversial cases, the Makkan and Madīnan sūrahs in Iṣlāḥī's groups, form distinct blocs, with the Madīnan bloc following the Makkan. The Makkan sūrahs in a group deal with the theoretical and the Madīnan sūrahs with the practical aspect of the group's *ᶜamūd*, though the relationship of a group's Madīnan sūrahs, unlike that of its Makkan sūrahs, to its *ᶜamūd* may not always be as close as Iṣlāḥī holds it is. Each group deals, though again in a generalized sense, with the various phases of the Islamic movement led by Muḥammad in Arabia. Iṣlāḥī's view that his *naẓm* scheme, with its sūrah pairs and sūrah groups, is sanctioned by the Qur'ān may be called plausible.

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CONCLUSIONS

1. Iṣlāḥī's approach to the Qur'ān is direct, holistic, and cumulative. It is direct in that it is based chiefly on a study of the Qur'ān itself.[1] Iṣlāḥī distinguishes between the internal and external principles of Qur'ān interpretation and attaches primary significance to the former. *Naẓm* is for him the most important of the internal principles.

Iṣlāḥī's approach is holistic in that it is predicated on the assumption that the Qur'ān is a well-integrated book and ought to be studied as such. Iṣlāḥī believes that the chronological order of the Qur'ānic revelations was suited to the times of Muḥammad and his Companions, but, for the following generations, the compilatory order carries greater significance. The compilatory order was based on the principle of *naẓm*, and it is the commentator's task to discover that *naẓm*.

Iṣlāḥī's approach is cumulative in that it conceives of Qur'ānic *naẓm* on several levels, each level being incorporated into the subsequent level. First comes the discovery of *naẓm* in individual sūrahs, then in sūrah pairs, and finally in sūrah groups. The *naẓm* of individual sūrahs is presupposed in a sūrah pair, that of sūrah pairs in a sūrah group.

2. Iṣlāḥī is indebted to Farāhī in respect of ideas as well as approach. He borrows from Farāhī not only the concept of the sūrah as a unity but also the techniques for arriving at the unity of a sūrah. But this does not mean that he is not an original writer. In the first place, he has made a sustained application of Farāhī's ideas and techniques to the Qur'ānic corpus, in itself no small achievement. In the second place, he seems to have taken over Farāhī's ideas only after careful scrutiny. We saw, for example, that he differs with Farāhī on the interpretation of the *ᶜamūds* of a few sūrahs—a proof that independent reflection on the Qur'ān sometimes led him to conclusions dissimilar to Farāhī's. In the third place, his concept of sūrah pairs is original, as is his interpretation of the notion of sūrah groups. In fact, if Iṣlāḥī is indebted to Farāhī, then, in a sense, Farāhī is indebted to Iṣlāḥī, for it is the latter who,

[1] Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 8:8.

by creatively interpreting Farāhī's concept of *naẓm* and enlarging its scope, has sought to establish effectively the latter's original thesis, namely, that the Qur'ān is possessed of *naẓm*.

3. Iṣlāḥī has convincingly shown—although it is not necessary to agree with all of his conclusions—that the Qur'ān has design and method. He has shown that individual Qur'ānic sūrahs revolve around specific central themes, that an essential complementarity exists between the members of sūrah pairs, and that larger sets of sūrahs, which he calls sūrah groups, display identifiable patterns of *naẓm*. A study of *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* is bound to leave one with the impression that, contrary to the usually held view, the Qur'ān is a well-ordered book. Iṣlāḥī has demonstrated that the Qur'ān has not only thematic but also structural coherence, that, for example, not only do the sūrahs of a group deal with a definite master theme, but also the structure of the group is a logical one, and that the thematic and structural aspects of *naẓm* are ultimately inseparable from each other.

4. This in turn has a bearing on an important question: Who edited the Qur'ān? As we noted in chapter II, Muslim scholars unanimously hold that Muḥammad himself was responsible for the arrangement of the verses in sūrahs; they disagree, however, on the question of who was responsible for the arrangement of the sūrahs. Some say it was Muḥammad himself; others think—and this is the general orientalist position also—that the task was completed by the Companions of Muḥammad after his death. John Burton has argued in *The Collection of the Qur'ān* that the whole of the Qur'ān was compiled by Muḥammad.[2] Without going into details of Burton's methodology, we may remark that what Burton seeks to prove through a study of extra-Qur'ānic sources, Iṣlāḥī seeks to prove through a study of the Qur'ānic text itself. The following 'syllogistic' argument may be constructed on the basis of Iṣlāḥī's *naẓm* theory.

The individual sūrahs of the Qur'ān are coherent. The verses in these sūrahs are known to be arranged by Muḥammad. The Qur'ān as a whole is coherent. Therefore the sūrahs too must have received their arrangement from Muḥammad.

The argument has a loophole, for it presupposes that all coherence in the Qur'ān, whether in the arrangement of verses in an individual sūrah or in the arrangement of sūrahs, will be attributed

[2]Burton, pp. 239-240. We are not saying that all of Burton's conclusions are correct. Neither does the following statement in the text mean that all or most of Burton's conclusions would be acceptable to Iṣlāḥī.

to Muḥammad. Is it not possible that Muḥammad's Companions achieved the same coherence with arranging sūrahs that Muḥammad had achieved with arranging verses in sūrahs? This is certainly possible, though perhaps not very likely. For between the *naẓm* of verses and the *naẓm* of sūrahs there is an affinity of character that is best explained on the assumption that it is due to the same agency, in this case Muḥammad.[3] Moreover, if Muḥammad took care to give a certain arrangement to verses in sūrahs, how could he have remained indifferent to the arrangement of the sūrahs themselves?

5. If the Qur'ān in its present form is characterized by coherence, then the chronological order of the Qur'ān becomes largely irrelevant, or at most only of historical importance. Considerable energy has been spent in attempts to identify that order. But it is universally admitted that a complete and accurate chronological arrangement of the Qur'ān is almost impossible to discover. If it is impossible to do so, and if the present arrangement is found to be significant, then perhaps it is with this arrangement that we should be principally concerned. At least that would seem to be the intention of whoever is to be credited with giving the Qur'ān the arrangement it now has.

6. Should the principle of *naẓm* become an integral part of the approach to the Qur'ān, it will become necessary to make a critical examination of much of the traditional exegetical corpus in the light of this principle. A regular and consistent use of the principle might result in at least a partial reformulation of the exegetical theory. It might result, for example, in a diminished dependance on the occasions of revelation as an exegetical aid. We saw that several of the authors discussed—like Rāzī, Ṭabāṭabā'ī, and Sayyid Quṭb—tend to reject an occasion of revelation if it appears to be in conflict with a *naẓm* interpretation of the Qur'ān. Reliance on the principle of *naẓm* seems to reduce dependance on the *asbāb an-nuzūl*, and the correlation is easy to explain. In an atomistic approach to a text, each unit of the text (usually not more than one or a few sentences or verses) is interpreted in isolation from the other units, and thus any datum external to the text but appearing to throw light on it is welcome. An integrated or holistic approach, however, establishes a

[3]One of the implications of this view (namely, that the sūrahs were arranged in the Qur'ān by Muḥammad in accordance with the principle of *naẓm*) would be that the principle of diminishing length will definitely have to be discarded as the principle governing the order of the sūrahs in the Qur'ān—the view most popular with orientalist scholars.

contextual framework with definite hermeneutic constraints that must be reckoned with in interpreting the text, with the result that things like *asbāb an-nuzūl* have to pass the acid test of contextual relevance before they can be accepted.

7. The concept of *naẓm* as such is not original to Farāhī and Iṣlāḥī. What is original, however, is their interpretation of the concept. They differ from other Muslim scholars not only in holding that the Qur'ān has structural *as well as* thematic *naẓm,* but also in maintaining that *naẓm* is an indispensable instrument of exegesis. By applying the *naẓm* principle to the Qur'ān—and they have shown that the Qur'ān is quite amenable to such an application—they seek to place the Qur'ān in a definitive context in order to arrive at definitive Qur'ān interpretation. (See Appendix B.)

8. The Farāhī-Iṣlāḥī *naẓm* theory yields results that are aesthetically pleasing. The idea that the Qur'ān is a book that presents its themes systematically in individual sūrahs, sūrah pairs, and sūrah groups confers on the Qur'ān a formal excellence that has not been attributed to it before. Also, with its emphasis on the study of the Qur'ān as a unity, the theory is in keeping with the spirit of modern literary analysis. And, with its emphasis, for purposes of interpretation, on the study of the Qur'ānic text itself, it is in harmony with, and at the same time accentuates, modern trends in Qur'ān exegesis.

9. While Iṣlāḥī's *naẓm* theory presents the Qur'ān in a new light and offers highly valuable insights, some of Iṣlāḥī's positions can be called in question. Perhaps the most questionable part of the theory is Iṣlāḥī's insistence that the theory, with its seven sūrah groups and sūrah pairing, has Qur'ānic sanction behind it. This view, if correct, will have to be accepted, together will all its corollaries and implications, by Muslims virtually as part of their faith in the Qur'ān. But is Iṣlāḥī's *naẓm* theory absolutely correct in each and every respect? Obviously a case can be made for its being no more than a hypothesis, albeit a strong hypothesis. One gets the impression that a personal conviction (born of many years of deep reflection on the Qur'ān and in itself quite understandable) has been presented by Iṣlāḥī as an objective fact, whereas to others it may not appear to be so. For example, Iṣlāḥī says that the seven sūrah groups of the Qur'ān are there for everyone to see.[4] But they are certainly not as obvious to other people as they are to Iṣlāḥī.

[4] Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 1:xiv; 7:481.

Moreover, we have seen that Qur'ānic *naẓm,* whether in the case of individual sūrahs, sūrah pairs, or sūrah groups, may not be as rigorous as Iṣlāḥī sometimes thinks it is, and that two scholars, even if they proceed from identical premises and employ an identical methodology, may reach different interpretations of the Qur'ān.

In all fairness, however, we should note that Iṣlāḥī himself says in the preface to the last volume of *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* that, with his commentary, he has merely paved the way for studying the Qur'ān along *naẓm* lines, and that a great deal of work in this regard lies ahead. He aptly quotes a well-known Persian couplet:

> *Gumān ma-bar kih ba-pāyān rasīd kār-i mughān/Hazār bādah-yi nā-khurdah dar rag-i tāk ast.*[5]
> (Don't think that the task of the tavern is accomplished; a thousand untasted wines lie hidden in the veins of grapes.)

10. Of the several possible areas for further research, two may be suggested. One of these pertains to the question of the interrelationship of the sūrah groups. Iṣlāḥī does offer a few useful hints about this interrelationship, but he does not make any sustained attempt to explain why the groups have the sequence they have in the Qur'ān. After the study of the *naẓm* of individual sūrahs, sūrah pairs, and sūrah groups, a study of the *naẓm* among the groups would have been the logical next step to take, but for some reason Iṣlāḥī does not take it.

The other area pertains to the study of the legislative Qur'ānic verses in the *naẓm* context of the sūrahs in which they occur. Such a study promises interesting results because, under the influence of the legalistic approach to the Qur'ān that resulted from the polemical atmosphere of early Islamic centuries, a number of juristical positions on many Qur'ānic verses were taken by Muslim scholars in disregard of the context in which the verses actually occurred. This area can be expanded to include a study of the ways in which different Muslim sects have sought to obtain from (the usually isolated) Qur'ānic verses sanction for their views.

[5] Ibid., 8:12.

IṢLĀḤĪ'S *NAẒM* INTERPRETATION OF SŪRAH 1

The opening sūrah of the Qur'ān is here treated in three parts. The first part gives a translation of the sūrah; the rendering is based on Iṣlāḥī's interpretation of the sūrah. The second part reproduces Iṣlāḥī's *naẓm* analysis of the sūrah. The third part sums up Iṣlāḥī's reasons for regarding the sūrah as a preface to the Qur'ān.

The Sūrah in Translation

Grateful Praise[1] is due to God, the Sustainer-Lord[2] of the universe,

the Most Compassionate, the Ever-Merciful,[3]

Master of the Day of Recompense.

You alone do we worship, and You alone do we ask for help.

[1]The Arabic word *ḥamd* in vs. 1 is usually interpreted as "praise." Primarily, however, the word means "gratitude," though the meaning of "praise" is not excluded. Whenever the Qur'ān uses, as here, the construction *al-ḥamdu li llāhi,* the meaning of gratitude is obviously implied, as, for example, in 7:43; 10:10: 14:39. Moreover, one praises someone's excellence even if one is not directly affected by it. But one is grateful to a person only when one is directly, and favorably, affected by his excellence. We must not simply praise God; we must offer gratitude to Him, for we are direct recipients of His blessings. *Tadabbur,* 1:12-13.

[2]The Arabic word *rabb* has two meanings: "Sustainer" and "Lord." The second meaning is a corollary of the first, for only a sustainer or nourisher deserves to be called "Lord." Usage, however, has made the second meaning the primary one, and the word is no longer used exclusively in the sense of "Sustainer." Ibid., p. 13.

[3]Iṣlāḥī has offered what is to my knowledge a new interpretation of the words ar-*raḥmān* and *ar-raḥīm* (respectively, "the Most Compassionate" and "the Ever Merciful"), and it is as follows. The two words have the same root, *RḤM,* with "mercy" as the essential meaning. It is usually held that the two words are simply intended to create emphasis (cf. the English "safe and sound" and "hale and hearty"). But this is not the case with *raḥmān* and *raḥīm* in the verse. *Raḥmān* is on the pattern of *fa*ᶜ*lān,* which connotes superabundance. *Raḥīm* is on the pattern of *fa*ᶜ*īl,* which connotes endurance. Now there are two dimensions to divine mercy: it is enduring, but on occasions it becomes superabundant. In His superabundant mercy, for example, God brought this universe into existence. But since His mercy is also enduring, He did not neglect the universe after creating it, but has been maintaining it and looking after it as well. In other words, *raḥmān* and *raḥīm* represent two different, but complementary, aspects of divine mercy, and neither word is superfluous or simply meant to lend emphasis to the other. *Tadabbur,* 1:6-7. The English translation given of these two words seeks to reflect the distinction made by Iṣlāḥī.

Establish us in the Right Path,[4]

the path of those you have blessed,

not [of] those who became the object of [Your] wrath,

nor [of] the ones who went astray.[5]

Naẓm of the Sūrah

This sūrah is in the form of a prayer that is uttered by the reader. The reader is not instructed to say the prayer in a certain manner. Rather, the prayer has been made to flow directly from his heart, with the implication that this is how a person who has kept the inherent goodness of his nature intact will pray to God. And since the prayer has been revealed by God, our Creator, we can be sure that it is couched in the best possible words.[6]

The sūrah explains the relationship between human gratitude and divine guidance. The feeling of gratitude (*ḥamd*) to God is a natural, in fact the most natural, feeling experienced by a human being. This feeling creates in man an urge to worship and serve God. To this urge God responds by revealing religion, which is nothing but a guide to worshipping and serving God.

Vs. 1. Man is under the constant care of God. There is, in this world, provision for man's physical, mental, and spiritual growth. The whole universe, it seems, has been harnessed into service for man. Upon noticing this elaborate system of providence that God has established for his well-being, man becomes overwhelmed by feelings of gratitude for the Creator of that system and exclaims: "Grateful praise is due to God, the Sustainer-Lord of the universe."

Vs. 2. But did God have to create such a system for us? Is He under any obligation to do so? Do we have any claims on His mercy? The obvious answer is "No." The only possible answer is

[4]The verse is usually translated: "Guide us to the Right Path." But Iṣlāḥī notes that the preposition *ilā* ("to"), which normally follows the verb *hadā,* is omitted in the verse. In accordance with the rules of Arabic grammar and rhetoric, the omission (*ḥadhf*) of the preposition lends an extraordinary emphasis to the prayer contained in the verse. Consequently, the verse does not simply mean: "Guide us to the Right Path"; it also implies: Give us contentment in the Right Path, make the Right Path easy for us to follow, and so on. Ibid., 1:15. Iṣlāḥī's Urdu translation of the verse is: *Hameñ sīdhe raste kī hidāyat bakhsh* (ibid., 1:11), which has the following literal translation: "Give us the guidance of the Right Path."

[5]Whether the sūrah consists of six or seven verses is a controversial matter. Iṣlāḥī does not consider the *basmalah* to be part of this, or any other sūrah, thus regarding the sūrah as consisting of six verses. See ibid. 1:7, 11.

[6]Ibid., 1:12.

that, in doing so, God is acting out of mercy. This realization impels man to say: "The Most Compassionate, the Ever Merciful."

Vs. 3. God's being the Sustainer-Lord implies that a day of reckoning must come. For privilege entails responsibility. If God has showered us with so many blessings, then surely it is unreasonable to suppose that He will not hold us accountable for the way we receive His blessings. There must come a day of judgment on which God will administer justice, rewarding the virtuous and punishing the wicked. Man is led to say: "Master of the Day of Recompense."

The Day of Judgment is also implied, or necessitated, by the fact that God is Merciful. For if God were to let the world come to an end without instituting such a day, then it would mean that there is no difference, in the eyes of God, between the virtuous and the wicked, that the wicked, indeed, are better off, since they can commit evil without fear of punishment. Such iniquity on the part of God would be negative of God's mercy. In other words, God's being merciful necessitates that He be just as well, a point that the Qur'ān makes on many occasions (as in 6:12). There is thus no contradiction between mercy and justice, the latter in fact being a manifestation of the former.

Vs. 4. God, then, is the Sustainer-Lord, is Merciful, and will one day judge mankind. Recognition of these facts makes man surrender himself to God and to acknowledge Him as the only Being who deserves to be worshipped and from whom help may be sought: "You alone do we worship, and You alone do we ask for help."

Vs. 5. Now that man has surrendered himself to God, he wants to find out how best to serve him. And since he has acknowledged God as the only source of help, he naturally seeks from Him the light of guidance: "Establish us in the Right Path." It is in response to this prayer that God raises prophets and sends down revelation.

Vs. 6. In order to express his unswerving commitment to the Right Path and his aversion to all the other paths, man adds: "The path of those You have blessed, not [of] those who became the object of [Your] wrath, nor [of] the ones who went astray."[7]

Iṣlāḥī's interpretation of the sūrah is obviously not the only *naẓm* interpretation that can possibly be arrived at. It will have to be granted, however, that his is a very plausible attempt to explain

[7]Ibid., 1:18-23.

the sūrah as a coherent piece, and that he has convincingly demonstrated that the verses deal with a single theme that is logically developed in the sūrah.

The Sūrah as a Preface to the Qur'ān

This sūrah is an ideal preface to the Qur'ān, and that for three reasons. First, it contains a succinct statement of the philosophical basis, according to the Qur'ān, of religion. Observation of the phenomena of God's munificence, mercy, and justice create in man the urge to worship God. The urge in turn creates in man a sense of need for divine guidance. The institution of prophecy and revelation are God's way of satisfying that need. Religion, in other words, supplies a need that naturally arises in man as a result of his experience in and reflection on the world.[8]

Second, all Qur'ānic themes can be summed up under three heads: the oneness of God, prophecy, and the hereafter. The sūrah offers basic guidance on the three master themes of the Qur'ān.

Third, earlier peoples had lost the Right Path that God had shown them. Mankind was in the dark. The sūrah is a prayer for the replacement of darkness by light. Man says this prayer, and, in response to it, God reveals the Qur'ān, the light which man had asked for. At the opening of S. 2 we read: *hudan li l-muttaqīn*, "[The Qur'ān is] a guidance for those who fear God." In S. 1 man asks for guidance, and, beginning with S. 2, he is provided with that guidance. In this sense, the Qur'ān may be said to have been revealed in response to man's prayer in S. 1.[9]

[8]Iṣlāḥī thus rejects the view that the origin of religion is fear. His argument is twofold. In the first place, the common experiences of life are pleasant and agreeable, not horrible and shocking. The common events of life are not earthquakes and floods and hurricanes. There is spring, too, and there is moonlight. Rains fall, flowers blossom, stars shine, and crops ripen. What kind of data does our common experience yield? The blessings of a provident, merciful Being or the calamities of storms and earthquakes? An unprejudiced mind will conclude that it is the former, not the latter. In the second place, fear itself needs to be analyzed. At bottom, fear is nothing but fear of the loss of something held precious, of something regarded as possessing a desirable quality, a positive value—in other words, a blessing. But the existence of a blessing presupposes the existence of the giver of the blessing, which in turn should create a sense of gratitude in man. In other words, the fundamental human feeling is that of gratitude, not of fear. Ibid., 1:21-22.

[9]Ibid., 1:26-27. Cf. Mawdūdī, 1:42.

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF A FEW VERSES IN IṢLĀḤĪ AND OTHER SCHOLARS

Six examples are given. The first three show how apparently disconnected verses are seen by Iṣlāḥī as contextually integrated; the verses in question are among the ones described by Montgomery Watt as "isolated," and Watt's comments on them are compared with Iṣlāḥī's. The next two examples show how Iṣlāḥī's *naẓm* theory helps him in arriving at a more cogent, and at the same time more definitive, Qur'ān interpretation. In the last example we shall compare, with reference to a Qur'ānic passage, the *naẓm* interpretations of Iṣlāḥī and Rāzī. Rāzī's *naẓm* views on this passage are borrowed by several other commentators (including Nīsābūrī, who reproduces them in full), and this makes Rāzī's position on it representative. In other words, in comparing him with Rāzī, we shall be comparing Iṣlāḥī with a number of writers.

Example 1: Qur'ān 2:178-179

1. *The Verses.* "Believers, you have been placed under an obligation to take *qiṣāṣ*[1] for the lives destroyed: a freeman for a freeman, a slave for a slave, and a woman for a woman. If he [killer] is then shown a measure of lenience by his brother, the prevalent custom must be observed and payment made to him in a befitting manner. This is a concession from your Lord and a kindness. But a tormenting punishment awaits one who transgresses after that. In *qiṣāṣ* there is life for you, men of wisdom—in order that you may attain to *taqwā*."[2]

2. *Watt.* "Thus 2.178-9[3] deals with retaliation; but though it comes amongst other passages also addressed to the believers and

[1] I prefer to retain the Arabic word used in the Qur'ān, because the usual translation, "retaliation," suggests a revenge motif (in the tradition of tribal feuds in pre-Islamic Arabia) that is not implied by the Qur'ānic word. As a Qur'ānic term, *qiṣāṣ* means the meting out of just and merited punishment by a properly constituted authority.

[2] On *taqwā*, see below.

[3] I have omitted, here and elsewhere, Watt's references to Flügel's edition of the Qur'ān.

dealing with other subjects, it has no necessary connection with them."[4]

3. *Iṣlāḥī.* With vs. 163 begins the part of the "Law" in S. 2. The basis of all law in Islam is *tawḥīd* or the belief in the oneness of God. Vss. 163-174 state this fundamental Islamic tenet, the statement also touching upon a few ancillary issues.[5] Vs. 177 points out that the measure of true faith in God is an ethically-based conduct and not performance of empty rituals.[6] This verseuses two key words, *birr* and *taqwā,* which may roughly be translated, respectively, "righteousness" and "God-consciousness." These theoretical considerations lead to the presentation, in vss. 178-179 onward, of specific injunctions that are based on the notions of *birr* and *taqwā* and have a strong social dimension to them. There are two types of rights whose protection is essential to the maintenance of peace, justice, and harmony in society, and they are: the right to life and the right to property. Vss. 178-179 emphasize the importance of protecting the first right, and, to that effect, lay down the principle of *qiṣāṣ*. The following two verses stress the need to protect the right to property.[7]

Thus we see that a statement of belief in *tawḥīd* leads, through a verse that brings out the true nature of that belief, to a discussion of some of the important social implications of that belief. In a word, vss. 178-179 are logically connected with the verses that precede and follow them.

Example 2: Qur'ān 5:11

1. *The Verse.* "Remember God's blessing upon you—at a time when a certain people had planned to attack you, and He kept them from you. Be mindful of God. It is God in whom believers ought to place their trust."

2. *Watt.* "Again 5.11 stands by itself and is clear enough, if only we knew the event to which it refers, but if it had been absent we should never have suspected that something had fallen out."[8]

[4] Watt, p. 74.

[5] Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 1:345-346, 350 ff.

[6] Ibid., 1:376 ff.

[7] Ibid., 1:386, 387, 393 ff. Iṣlāḥī notes that, in *Ḥadīth* as well as in the Qur'ān, th right to life and the right to property are often mentioned together. Ibid., 1:393, n.

[8] Watt, p. 74.

3. *Iṣlāḥī.* Vs. 8 of the same sūrah advises Muslims to stand up for truth and justice, and carries the implication that they must no longer have fear of their foes, that if they are faithful to God, then He will aid them against their enemies. The same idea is found in vs. 3 ("... so, have no fear of them; fear only Me"). Vs. 11 simply offers an illustration, with reference to an actual event from the recent past, of the idea that is stated explicitly in vs. 3 and implicitly in vs. 8.[9]

The verse is connected in thought not only with the preceding but also with the following verses. The next three verses continue the theme of faithfulness to God. They warn Muslims that failure to fulfill the pledge they have made with God will have for them, just as it did for the earlier peoples who broke that pledge, grave consequences.[10]

Watt may be right when he says that the absence of the verse from the passage in which it occurs would remain unnoticed. But that is missing the point. Whole paragraphs, indeed whole chapters may be taken out of a book and their absence, it is possible, will not be noticed by the reader. But the true test of the belongingness of a piece in a text is not whether its *absence* will be noted or not, but whether its *presence* can be accounted for. In my view, Iṣlāḥī has sufficiently proved that the verse is integrated into the context in which it appears.

Example 3: Qur'ān 80:24-32

1. *The Verses.* "Let man, then, consider the food he eats: how We pour down rain, then cleave the earth apart, causing to grow in it grain, grapes, edible plants, olive trees, date-palms, dense gardens, fruits and pasture—of use to you and to your animals."

2. *Watt.* "Verses 24-32 bears traces of having been fitted into a context to which it did not originally belong."

3. *Iṣlāḥī.* Vss. 17-23 of the sūrah express surprise at those who, in defiance of tangible evidence (drawn from the phenomena of human existence), deny the Resurrection. Vss. 24-32 provide further evidence (drawn from the vast system of sustenance that God has established for man) to the effect that the hereafter is necessary. For (as we saw in Appendix A) with privilege goes responsibility. We are the recipients of numberless blessings from God, and there must

[9]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 2:244.

[10]Ibid., 2:244-245.

come a day when we will be judged for the way have received those blessings. The verses that follow, namely, vss. 33-42, make a distinction between those who were ungrateful for the blessings and those who were not.[11]

Iṣlāḥī compares vss. 24-32 with vss. 17-23. There is, he says, a structural similarity between the two passages: each begins by establishing the possibility of the hereafter, then speaks about God's sustenance of man, and concludes by stating that recompense in the next world is the logical corollary of God's sustenance of man in this world.[12]

Vss. 24-32 are thus no more out of place in the sūrah than are vss. 17-23. Both passages make the same point, namely, that the coming of the Day of Judgment is a necessity.

Example 4: Qur'ān 6:74-83

1. *The Verses.* "Recall the time when Abraham said to his father, Āzar, 'Do you make deities out of images? I [can] see that you and your people are plainly in the wrong.' Thus did we show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, in order that he may become firm in faith. When night enveloped him, he saw a star. 'This is my Lord,' he said. But when it set, he said, 'I do not like the ones that set.' When he saw the moon shining, he said, 'This is my Lord.' But when it set, he said, 'If my Lord does not guide me, I shall become one of those who have gone astray.' When he saw the sun shining, he said, 'This is my Lord, this is the greatest [of them all].' But when it set, he said, 'My people, I have nothing to do with your idolatory. I turn my face away from everything else to the One Who has created the heavens and the earth, and I am not one of the idolators. ...' "

2. *Traditional Views.* Broadly speaking, there are two views about this passage. According to one of them, the verses describe the phases of Abraham's intellectual development: through reflection Abraham was able to reach the truth that there is only one

[11]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 8:192, 204-212. Cf. Farāhī, *Majmūʿah*, p. 273-274.

[12]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, 8:209. It is true that vss. 24-32 speak of the blessings and privileges that God has bestowed upon man, and do not explicitly mention the correlative notion of accountability. But, as Iṣlāḥī says, this notion is clearly implied here by the Qur'ān. Ibid., 8:211. There are a number of Qur'ānic passages that are strikingly similar to 80:24-32 and in which the correlative ideas of privilege and accountability are mentioned together. A good example is 78:6-17, where a description of God's blessings culminates in vs. 17, which reads: "The Day of Judgment, indeed, is an appointed one." See ibid., 8:159 ff. S. 1 provides another example (see Appendix A)

God. According to the other view, the verses report Abraham's debate with his people. Using the irony that is characteristic of his approach, Abraham first concedes that the sun, the moon, and stars (the objects his people worshipped), since they rise in the sky and shine, might have a claim to divinity. But Abraham points out to his people that these heavenly bodies not only rise, but also set, that they are subject to laws external to them, and that they therefore cannot partake of divinity. The first view seems to have been dominant in early Muslim exegesis, for Ṭabarī presents it as the main view.[13] Later scholars tend to support the other view.[14] Ālūsī, writing in the 13th/19th century, allows for both.[15]

3. *Iṣlāḥī.* Iṣlāḥī presents the second of the two views as the definitive one. The point to note is that it is the application of the *naẓm* principle that accounts for this definitive interpretation.[16] As we saw in chapter VI, S. 6 confronts the Quraysh with the original Abrahamic religion and says that, in accepting Islam, they will be accepting the religion that Abraham himself stood for. Seen in this light, vss. 74-83 represent a climactic point in the sūrah, the incident from Abraham serving as a striking illustration of the sūrah's central theme.

Example 5: Qur'ān 8:67-68

1. *The Verses.* "It does not behoove a prophet to take prisoners, [for this purpose going] to the length of causing carnage in the land.[17] You [Quraysh] seek the gains of this world, whereas God seeks the next life, and God is Dominant, Wise. If a decree from God had not already existed, severe punishment would have befallen you for the way you conducted yourselves."[18]

2. *Traditional Interpretation.* All scholars agree that these

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[13]Ṭabarī, 7:242 ff.

[14]See, for example, Zamakhsharī, 2:30-31; Rāzī, 13:34 ff.; Nīsābūrī, 7:142.

[15]Ālūsī, 7:198.

[16]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 2:468-476.

[17]This translation is based on Iṣlāḥī's interpretation of the verse. A translation according to the traditional interpretation would be: "It does not behoove a prophet to take prisoners *until* he has caused carnage in the land." The difference is a basic one and is discussed in the text below.

[18]One of the meanings of *akhadha,* Iṣlāḥī says, is "to conduct oneself in a certain way," and it is this meaning that is intended here. The word, that is to say, does not refer to the "taking" (*akhadha*) of ransom from the prisoners, as is generally held.

verses were revealed in criticism of the Muslims, especially Muḥammad and Abū Bakr. Muḥammad, it is said, accepted Abū Bakr's suggestion that the prisoners of the Battle of Badr be allowed to buy their freedom, rejecting ᶜUmar's suggestion that the prisoners be executed. The Qur'ān, in other words, here approves of the suggestion of ᶜUmar and criticizes Muḥammad and Abū Bakr.[19]

3. *Iṣlāḥī.* Iṣlāḥī regards this interpretation as fundamentally mistaken, and that for several reasons. First, by allowing the prisoners to buy their freedom, the Muslim did not violate any previously revealed "decree" from God. At the most it could be called an error of *ijtihād* ("independently formed judgment"), and a mistaken *ijtihād* is not something for which one deserves to be reprimanded in such severe terms, especially when we see that this is an *ijtihād* that gets immediate approval from the Qur'ān (vs. 69). Second, it was not even an error of *ijtihād,* for 47:4 had already permitted taking ransom from war prisoners. Third, enough blood had already been shed in the battle: seventy leading figures of the Quraysh had been killed, as many had been taken captive, and the rest had fled. The question is: Who was left to kill so that a "carnage" should have resulted? Fourth, the Qur'ān never speaks of anyone—except of die-hard disbelievers and the Hypocrites—in such harsh terms; there seems to be no reason why it should be speaking of Muslims in such terms.[20]

The whole trouble arises because it is supposed that the Qur'ān is here addressing the Muslims, whereas it is the Quraysh who are being addressed. The sūrah is to be understood against the background of the Battle of Badr. After their defeat at Badr, the Quraysh tried to wipe out the effects of the battle. With the two-fold aim of restoring the badly shaken confidence of the Makkans and demoralizing the now self-assured Muslims, they launched a propaganda campaign in a new key. What kind of prophet is Muḥammad, they said, for he has caused dissension among his own people, made war against them, and taken them prisoner in order later to receive ransom from them. In a word, they tried to portray Muḥammad as a power-hungry person who would go to any lengths to achieve his ambition. Vss. 67-68 exonerate Muḥammad from the charges the Quraysh had brought against him and blame the Quraysh for what

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[19]See Ṭabarī, 10:42-48; Zamakhsharī, 2:168-169; Rāzī, 15:196-203; Nīsābūrī, 10:26-28; Abū Ḥayyān, 2:168-169; Wāḥidī, pp. 178-180; Suyūṭī, *Asbāb,* 2:91; Ālūsī, 10:32-36.

[20]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 3:100-103.

had happened. A prophet, these verses are saying, is not the kind of person who would shed blood in order to capture prisoners from whom he might extract ransom. This is the mentality of the Quraysh, but not of Muḥammad, who is a prophet. Vs. 69 aims at neutralizing the possible adverse effect of the Quraysh's propaganda, for the propaganda could have influenced some Muslims—perhaps many Muslims since the dominant view about religion at that time was that it taught asceticism and renunciation, a view on which the Quraysh could have capitalized. The verse therefore permits the Muslims to enjoy the spoils of war without any qualms. Finally, vss. 70-71 address the prisoners and say that they should be grateful for their release, but that they will meet a similar fate in the future if they do not desist from their opposition to Muḥammad.[21]

Seen in this light, the verses in question (67-68) not only fit into their context, they also yield a more satisfying interpretation than traditional scholars have offered of them.

Example 6: Qur'ān 75:16-19

1. *The Verses.* "Do not move your tongue in haste so that it [revelation] is precipitated. We have taken it upon ourselves to collect and recite it. When, therefore, we recite it, follow the reciting of it. Then it is up to Us to expound it."

2. *Rāzī.* Rāzī suggests five ways in which the verses may be connected with the ones that precede and follow them. a) Upon reaching this part of the sūrah Muḥammad recited the verses hastily, and the Qur'ān forbids him to do so. b) The theme of haste, brought up in the sūrah (as in vs. 20) as the theme of the disbelievers' love of the here and now (*ᶜājilah*), is generalized and haste of all kinds is condemned. c) Fear of forgetting it was Muḥammad's excuse for his hasty recitation of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān tells him that it is trust in God, and not haste on his part, that will aid him in memorizing the Qur'ān. d) Muḥammad's hasty recitation was motivated by his desire to memorize the Qur'ān and convey it to the disbelievers so that they might believe in it. The Qur'ān, however, says that their disbelief is caused by defiance and not by lack of understanding, and that their salvation should therefore not be his concern. e) On the Day of Judgment, the disbelievers, trusting their own powers, will make an attempt to escape the decree of God, but will fail in the attempt (vss. 10-12). Muḥammad should, instead of

[21]Ibid., 3:100-105.

trusting his own power of retention, place his trust in God in memorizing the Qur'ān.[22]

3. *Iṣlāḥī.* Essentially, Iṣlāḥī borrows his interpretation of 75:16-17 from Farāhī, but he refines it and adds to it. It is as follows. The sūrah's *ᶜamūd* is: affirmation of the Day of Judgment by reference to human conscience, which represents, in miniature form, the Final Court that God will establish on the Day of Judgment. Doubts about the possibility of the Day of Judgment are, therefore, doubts about the existence of one's own conscience, and, as such, have no real basis.[23]

Muḥammad was constantly pestered by the disbelievers with questions and objections about the hereafter. They sarcastically asked him (vs. 6): When will the Day of Judgment be? Such questions and objections naturally worried Muḥammad, and he relied upon revelation for answers. In fact, it was revelation that furnished him with a blueprint for action, aided him in coping with the problems of the present and preparing for the tasks of the future, and sustained him intellectually and spiritually. He, therefore, anxiously awaited the coming of revelation, and when it came, like an eager student tried to acquire all of it at once. It is this eagerness that the Qur'ān is here speaking of. The Qur'ān is saying that revelation is being sent to him in accordance with a certain plan and that he should not try to precipitate it, for God has taken it upon Himself to preserve and expound the Qur'ān for him. After advising Muḥammad to be patient, the sūrah, from vs. 20 onward, again connects with the main theme of the hereafter.[24]

Iṣlāḥī's interpretation of the verses is much more logical than Rāzī's. While Rāzī tries to establish highly tentative connections between these and other—isolated—verses of the sūrah, Iṣlāḥī places the verses in the context of the whole sūrah and explains the clear and definite connection they bear to the sūrah's *ᶜamūd.* It may be added that these verses are regarded as disconnected by a majority

[22]Rāzī, 30:222-223.

[23]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 8:71, 78-82. See also Farāhī, *Majmūᶜah,* pp. 202-211.

[24]Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur,* 8:84-87.

of scholars, Muslim and Orientalist.[25] Iṣlāḥī would appear to have shown that they bear an integral relation to the sūrah.

[25] Farāhī, *Majmū^{c}ah*, p. 210. Watt calls it a "curious isolated passage" (p. 22). Cf. Nöldeke's comment on the verses: "In Sūra 75 befinden sich ein paar Verse (16-19), die weder mit ihrer nächsten Umgebung noch mit andern Versen der Sūra zusammenhängen. Auf welche Weise sie hierher verschlagen worden sind, ist nicht [illegible] sagen." *Geschichte*, 1:105.

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INDEX